

SECOND-YEAR TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF A TEACHER INDUCTION
PROGRAM: A CLOSE-UP OF ONE SCHOOL DISTRICT

A Dissertation

by

KARLA WYNELL EIDSON

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2009

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

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ABSTRACT

Second-Year Teacher Perceptions of a Teacher Induction Program:

A Close-up of One School District. (December 2009)

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Teacher induction programs are a means to support and guide new teachers in bridging the gap between pre-service preparation and assuming the role as a professional educator. This qualitative case study reviews the perceptions of second-year teachers regarding the induction program, Beginning Educators Support and Training (BEST) they experienced. The in-depth study explores the relationship between an induction program in a small urban Texas school district and the second-year teachers participating in that program. The participants in the study were three, second-year elementary teachers. The methods of data collection were one-on-one interviews, a questionnaire, and journal responses from all participants. My research question was: What are the second-year teachers' perceptions of the BEST program?

In addressing this question, this study obtained responses to four sub-questions:

- 1) Do the second-year teachers' perceptions of the BEST program correlate with their perceived effectiveness as teachers?
- 2) What are the problems new teachers face?
- 3) How do second-year teachers perceive the impact administrators have on induction

programs and new teachers? and, 4) What components of the induction program are recognized by these second-year teachers?

Research supports the assertion that new teacher induction programs have been proven to provide support to new teachers in the critical first few years, and this study supported the induction process in relation to the new teacher socialization process and transitioning from pre-service preparation to classroom teacher of record. The induction process was not the salient factor the teacher participants attributed to their job satisfaction and to their remaining in the school district. However, the support, nurturing, and guidance provided through the mentoring culture fostered by the BEST program were significant to the subjects' teaching success during their critical first years of teaching.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Wynell Henry LeCroy, a professionally trained educator in her own right, who instilled a confidence in me, starting at an early age, that I could accomplish anything that I set my mind to. The sacrifices she has made to help me become an educated individual have both saved my life and provided deep joy to me as I have pursued learning and fallen in love with the teaching profession. Over the years she has changed in my eyes, from being the best mom in the world to being one of the most amazing women I have ever met.

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Finally, thanks to my children, Tyler, Tori, and Josh, who have shared their mom with this study and degree; for Heather, Jessica, and Austin, who have heard about “the paper” countless times and still managed to act interested; and to the best editor I know, my incredible husband, Thom. I hope that my enthusiasm for higher learning has outweighed the difficulty of its pursuit and that we will all be the better for it.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

How prepared are new teachers for their classroom duties? Can new teachers be encouraged to stay in the profession? What types of programs and/or processes could help close the reality gap (Danielson & McGreal, 2000) between pre-service training and entrance into the real classroom? These are the questions often asked by individuals transitioning from their teacher preparation into a classroom where they will be the teacher of record for the very first time.

Many beginning teachers flounder, fail, and leave the teaching profession after a short time. Other new teachers enter the profession and stay but never master the knowledge and skills needed to become even minimally effective (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Such shortcomings have spurred educational legislation such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005), forcing schools to attempt to conform to the current policy rhetoric demands of the “highly qualified” teacher stipulation.

The format for this dissertation is following the style of *The Journal of Research in Reading*.

The recruitment and retention of new teachers is often dependent upon the new teacher being effectively trained through clinical experiences that support good practice (Stronge, 2002). Research also supports the statement that induction programs make a difference in teacher retention (Colbert & Wolff, 1992; Hegler & Dudley, 1987; Odell & Ferraro, 1992; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wood, 1999). Further, high-quality professional development can affect teacher learning (e.g., Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2001).

Wong, Britton & Ganser (2005) examined high-quality induction programs both within the United States and abroad. They found that all had “three major similarities: they are highly structured, they focus on professional learning, and they emphasize collaboration” (p. 383). As school districts recognize the need to systematically support new teachers, induction programs are cropping up across the country. Induction programs, defined as “preplanned, structured, and short-term assistive programs offered in schools for beginning teachers” (Lawson, 1992, p. 163), represent a systematic effort to initiate, shape, and sustain teachers in the profession.

Induction programs such as those studied by Ingersoll and Kralik (2004) and Debolt (1992) have been found to help new teachers make the shift from being consumers of teacher preparation curricula to being providers of effective day-to-day classroom management, instruction, and administration. Successful induction programs can help to bridge the reality gap referred to above by Danielson and McGreal (2000), providing a support system for new teachers who are attempting to manage the career transition from being students to being teachers. Induction, distinct from in-service and

pre-service teacher training programs, focuses on supporting and guiding new teachers during their transition into a new profession (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). According to Debolt (1992), “Induction involves the gradual acquisition of professional expertise over an extended period of time” (p. xiii).

In quality terms, if improvement is desired, then talented people should be recruited and their collective development on the job fostered from the day they begin their jobs (Breux and Wong, 2003; Fuller, 2003). To combat the attrition rate that contributes to current teacher shortages, universities need to better prepare pre-service teachers (Gold, 1989), and school districts need to find strategic means, such as induction programs (Odell & Huling, 2000), to enhance the transition and to reduce the number of teachers leaving the profession within the first few years (Breux & Wong, 2003).

Problem

Often, the unspoken message to new teachers is, “Figure it out yourself, do it yourself, and keep it to yourself” (Breux & Wong, 2003, p. 7). For new teachers, transitioning from being students to being teachers often involves a “sink or swim” approach with no significant mentoring prior to the first day (Breux & Wong, 2003; Huling-Austin, et al., 1989; Lambert, 2003; Lortie, 1975; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Veenman, 1984). For example, the most common problems of new teachers are dealing with discipline and classroom management, developing strategies for planning and organization, motivating students, adjusting to the teaching environment, dealing with

time pressures, and trying to maintain their personal lives (Gold & Roth, 1993; Troman & Woods, 2001). Often, however, new teachers are given little or no special help with developing solutions for these problems, creating a ripple effect that can prove disadvantageous for the new teachers, their students, and their colleagues.

What other profession so completely isolates its newest members from daily and direct contact with colleagues? New teachers, like other professionals, enter their respective careers needing to transfer the knowledge they received in academic course work to what they must do as practitioners. Doctors and lawyers have extensive internships prior to receiving certification or licensure. Plumbers and electricians go through apprenticeship programs before assuming sole responsibility in their respective professions. New teachers, however, do not experience this extensive period of apprenticeship. They may instead experience only a few weeks of actual teaching in the classroom during their pre-service teaching experiences. Not only that, but as indicated by Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek and Morton(2007), new teachers are often given little or no guidance once they are placed in their classrooms. Instead, they are often “left to their own devices” and must “struggle day to day” to develop and present suitable instructional materials.

Ideally, school districts and other stakeholders should provide support for new teachers to enhance achievement in the classroom (Jonson, 2002). However, according to Stronge (2002), “researchers indicated that teachers develop from novices to masters at different intervals over time, taking from five to eight years to master the art, science,

and craft of teaching” (p. 9). Unfortunately, most new teachers do not have access to any sort of internship or formal induction program as they enter their careers.

In transitioning from being in a teacher preparation program to being a teacher of students, new teachers face challenges that make the first years of teaching uniquely difficult (Huling-Austin et al., 1989). In light of this, induction training can lead to reduced anxiety for new teachers, can increase retention of a higher-quality teaching force, provides a shared culture throughout the district, and encourages improved student achievement (Breux & Wong, 2003, see especially p. 94).

Fewer than one percent of teachers get what the Alliance for Excellent Education (2004) calls a “comprehensive” induction package: a reduced number of course preparations, a helpful mentor in the same field, a seminar tailored to meet the needs of beginning teachers, strong communication with administrators, and time for planning and collaboration with other teachers.

As stated thus far, a number of studies support the direct positive correlation of induction programs with improved teacher performance and retention, but there are few studies that focus directly on the perceptions that the new teachers have of these programs (see, for examples of such studies, K. Behan, 2008; J. Eckola, 2007; C. Korenek, 2008; D., Lambeth, 2007). As will be shown in Chapter II, some research also exists that studies teacher effectiveness as measured by teacher performance and retention. However, this researcher found only two studies that focused specifically on new teachers’ perceptions of support programs for new teachers: a study conducted with first-year teachers regarding the Beginning Educators Support Training program (BEST)

in North Carolina; and Helfeldt, Capraro, Capraro, Foster, & Carter (2009); which examines preparation and retention of teachers for high-need schools. There were no studies found that specifically review teacher perceptions of the BEST program in Texas, and no studies on second-year teacher perceptions of any induction program. An extensive review of the literature, noting the absence of information mentioned above, led to this particular research proposal. There is a great deal of study and research in areas of teacher induction programs, but little, if any, concentrating on this particular topic. An accurate “snapshot,” gained by conducting a thorough case study of second-year teacher perceptions of a new-teacher induction program, may add to the body of literature by providing the education community with data to enable more informed decisions about induction programs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to gather second-year teachers’ perceptions of a formal induction program. With the successful implementation of an induction program, schools may be able to retain more highly qualified teachers in the future. My study seeks to document the perceptions of the participating second-year teachers in order to gain inferences that may indicate whether the teachers believe the program has been helpful toward improving their effectiveness as teachers.

As already stated, according to research, in order to attract and retain quality teachers, school districts and states are realizing the importance of new teacher induction programs (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Breaux & Wong, 2003). Induction programs with

mentoring are quickly becoming a preferred vehicle to attract and retain quality teachers in schools. Support in establishing good classroom management techniques, effective instructional strategies, or developing other key elements of teaching success is sometimes just what the new teacher needs to survive (Odell & Huling, 2000).

There is a critical need for developing a process to guide new teachers in becoming highly qualified educators, since they will be held accountable for educating America's youth. However, new teachers enter the profession with a limited repertoire of instructional strategies. Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden (2005) note, "Each year, more than one hundred thousand new teachers enter classrooms across America" (p. 1). The beginning teacher may lack a rigorous education in some essential knowledge and clinical training, thus all new teachers do not enter the teaching profession with the same set of skills and experiences. Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2005) emphasize three general areas of common practices of effective teachers as crucial to helping beginning teachers be successful with their students: "1) knowledge of learners, 2) understanding of the subject matter and skills that need to be taught, and 3) understanding of teaching" (p. 5). Teaching, learners, and subject matter are interdependent. It is the teacher's role to develop the necessary skills and the commitment to know what he/she needs to know to help all students succeed. "Teaching," as John Dewey once remarked, "is like selling commodities—they are not sold if nobody buys them. And a teacher has not taught if no one learns" (cited in Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005, p. 6).

Too many teachers have gone through teacher education programs where they did not receive a rigorous education in some area of essential knowledge or undergo the type of clinical training that would prepare them for success in the classroom. According to Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden (2005), “Contemporary research suggests that learning about teaching best develops when prospective teachers encounter content and contexts in which it can be applied” (p.41). A formal, supportive relationship with other teachers and administrators can help ease stress and provide a learning community for new teachers, giving them not only the content they need to master but also a practical context for its application.

Research Question

This study seeks answers to the following question: What are the second-year teachers’ perceptions of the BEST program?

In addressing this question, this study obtains responses to four sub-questions:

1. Do the second-year teachers’ perceptions of the BEST program correlate with their perceived effectiveness as teachers?
2. What are the problems new teachers face?
3. How do second-year teachers perceive the impact administrators have on induction programs and new teachers?
4. What components of the induction program are recognized by these second-year teachers?

Open-ended-question interviews (Appendix A), a questionnaire (Appendix B) and a series of reflective journal stems (Appendix D) helped to evoke the answers for these questions and helped to develop a clearer picture of a school district's induction program as perceived by teachers who are still in the induction phase of their teaching career, but past the first year often referred to as the "Survival Mode" year (Garet, et al. 2001).

Each of the three participants' perspectives were explored in this study in order to develop a detailed interpretative case study.

Research Methodology

A case study methodology was chosen because this research strategy allows for "purposive sampling ... based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriman, 1998, pg. 61). A case study in qualitative research is a way of doing social science research in investigating empirical topics using a set of specified procedures (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Merriman, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2005). Case study is an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). Yin (2005), Stake (1995), and others who have wide experience in this methodology have developed robust procedures, and when these procedures are followed the researcher may be assured of using methods that are as well developed and tested as any in the scientific field. Case studies are designed to bring out the details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data. It is

for these reasons that this is the methodology selected for a study of second-year teacher perceptions.

Selecting cases must be done so as to maximize what can be learned in the period of time available for the study. Simultaneous data collection allows for cross-checking of data as well as drawing comparisons and contrasts in order to view data from a more complete perspective. For that reason, data will be collected simultaneously in an effort to better understand the perceptions experienced by the second-year teachers.

Open-ended questions (Appendix A) allowed subjects' perceptions and opinions to be presented without limiting them to a fixed scale or response (Patton, 2002). The intent of this type of question is to lead to rich, in-depth dialogue that enhance the researcher's understanding of the three participant's perceptions of the BEST program. One open-ended questionnaire (Appendix B), four reflective journal entries completed in four separate weeks (Appendix D), and two interviews (Appendix A) were used to collect data related to the research question.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study is to identify the perceptions of second-year teachers who were involved in the district's induction program as to the program's influence, if any, on their effectiveness as teachers. The data collection methods specified addressed the study's purpose through examination of the research question. Accuracy and validity of the findings are ensured through several processes, including use of comparative data through the implementation of multiple sources (questionnaire, interviews, and reflective journaling), rich descriptions, and clarification of researcher bias (Creswell, 2003).

The researcher's bias in this study derives from prior experience with mentoring programs, albeit in a different setting. The researcher believed that mentoring is a worthwhile endeavor that benefits new teachers, mentors, and students. Due to this preexisting bias, the researcher took careful consideration to avoid this bias's interference with data collection and analysis. This was accomplished through the consistent application of interviewing protocols, tape recording of interviews, and the identified conceptual framework used for content analysis.

The data analysis consisted of transcribing the one-on-one interviews, followed by member checking of the transcriptions. The researcher developed a code system for the participant's comments during the interviews and employed field notes to help define categories for the inductive analysis process using emerging themes and topics. Triangulation in the data analysis process added details and vividness to the study.

Assumptions and Significance of the Study

The assumptions of this study are that the interpretations in this study will accurately reflect the actual perceptions intended by those who were surveyed and that the methodology offers an appropriate design for this study.

The outcomes of this study may benefit stakeholders in New Oaks ISD and also inform educators and researchers studying new teacher induction programs by providing useful information regarding the data on the influential components of present induction programs, their perceived effects on new teachers, and the administrator's role in the program. New teachers may glean information from this study that may assist them in

getting the support and guidance they need to succeed in the teaching profession. They can also find comfort in knowing that they are not alone when faced with the challenges of being a new teacher. Individuals in leadership roles can use the information from this study to evaluate the importance of an induction program for new teachers. The knowledge gained from the participants will help provide in-depth insight in constructing and interpreting data that school districts can utilize when assessing, reforming, and/or refining their existing programs.

Perceptions pertaining to job satisfaction, support from colleagues and administrators, and professional development during the induction phase are key components in evaluating, establishing, or directing an exemplary induction program. It is important that research continue to examine induction programs as a strategy for new teacher retention. School districts have a responsibility to their new teachers for developing a culture and environment that promotes and supports the teaching and learning process. This study could be significantly instrumental in that process. By studying a formal teacher induction program and its perceived effects on second-year teachers, this research will contribute to the refinement of strategies for teacher retention and effectiveness.

Limitations

In addition to the potential limitations inherent in qualitative study (Patton, 2002), since there were considerably fewer than thirty participants involved in the research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006), two other limitations in this case study were the small sample size (three participants) and the fact that all three second-year teachers in

the study were female. When I entered the study, I did not know all the participants would be female. If a larger sample were used, males might have been part of the study. The perceptions of teaching by males and females may tend to vary due to the concept of gender (Merriman, 1998; Olesen, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

This study's methodology is not without its limitations, stemming largely from the qualitative nature of the study. Patton (2002) cautions that qualitative inquiry related to perceptions, specifically interview data, is highly susceptible to distorted or inaccurate responses. Interview responses may be biased or colored by the interviewee's emotional state (Patton, 2002). In addition, recall error may come into play, particularly if the questions being asked relate to past experiences (Patton, 2002). Interviewees may react to the interviewer and potentially provide responses altered for the purpose of pleasing the interviewer (Patton, 2002). Additionally, the study is limited by its dependence on the respondents' candor, completeness, and accuracy in the data they recorded in their journals and on the open-ended questionnaires. All of these limitations have been taken into consideration when completing this qualitative research and analysis.

Because of these limitations, data collection and analysis in this study employs several measures that attempt to validate the findings of the research. Use of comparative data, for example, involves exploring the same questions through several methods and sources (Creswell, 2003). This particular study gathers comparative data through the use of both a questionnaire and interviews. In-depth, rich descriptions of findings also lend to the study's validity (Creswell, 2003). In addition, identifying the

researcher's personal bias at the outset of the study increases its validity (Creswell, 2003).

The study will be limited to information acquired from literature reviews available and known to the researcher and the instruments used to collect data (interviews, questionnaire and journal stems). Additionally, because of the use of purposeful sampling in the methodology, the generalizability of results may be limited to the specific setting in New Oaks Independent School District. Lastly, limitations will also appear because of the variation in pre-service teacher education the study participants received which will be described more fully in Chapter IV).

All of these limitations were taken into consideration when completing this qualitative research and analysis.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature review was an ongoing process, beginning with those conducted in early doctoral course work and continuing throughout the designing and writing of this study. While I reviewed major works in the beginning teacher literature, I read selectively in professional development, the psychological stages of new teachers, and school culture. As I sought to understand the complexity of each theoretical or empirical piece of evidence, there was always another work to provide further insight.

Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

An important goal of institutions of higher education is to prepare pre-service teachers with the necessary knowledge, tools, and methodology to deliver curriculum and instruction. Unfortunately, beginning teachers are often unprepared for both the problems children bring to school and the demands of their institutions: paperwork, documentation, meetings, and managing their personal lives (Stronge, 2002; Breaux and Wong, 2003). Case and Metthes (1985) refer to the need for restructuring teacher education at the university/college level to better develop knowledge and skills as bases for practice, to prepare candidates for entry into the profession (pre-service), and to contribute to the ongoing development of professional development for practicing

professionals as ways of delivering and retaining quality teachers for the workforce. While pre-service issues are important in developing highly qualified teachers, as an individual enters teaching, professional development becomes the primary learning device. Both pre-service and veteran educators should be open to learning in order to grow in the field of teaching and to work toward becoming highly qualified teachers.

The George W. Bush administration responded to the issue of quality teachers with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reform initiative. Under NCLB every state was to have 100% of its teachers meeting the “highly qualified” status by the end of the 2005–06 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). “Highly qualified” is defined in Section 9101 of the NCLB legislation as “an individual who has obtained full state certification (including alternate routes) or has passed a state teacher licensing exam” (Texas Education Agency, 2007, p. 51). “Highly qualified” has been critiqued as a minimal qualification for teachers, thus creating a need for new teacher induction training with effective and lasting effects on teacher quality and retention.

Standards specific to novice teachers, such as the Praxis Series assessments by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), have been developed to establish quality performance expectations. The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) has created a system to both assist and assess new teachers (INTASC, 1992). The use of a relatively common set of standards to assure quality of new teachers admitted to the profession has been adopted by several states, including Texas, as an assessment tool (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005; Odell & Huling, 2000). The National Commission on Teaching and

America's Future (NCTAF), a symposium in which Texas was one of the twenty state partners involved, identified three strategies to help balance teacher preparation for stronger retention strategies in August, 2002. They are:

1. Organize every school for teaching and learning success;
2. Ensure that the teacher preparation systems meet both the teaching requirements of our schools and the learning needs of students;
3. Develop and sustain professionally rewarding career paths for teachers from induction through accomplished teaching (IPSB, 2000).

Professional development can build professional competency and offer effective strategies for new teachers (Stronge, 2002). Further, new trends concentrate on actively involving teachers as participants within their institutions rather than relying on professional development as a means of retention. Collaboration, networking, discussion groups, reflection, and site-based teacher groups are vehicles for faculty and staff to utilize in focusing on specific needs within the school climate (Danielson & McGreal, 2000). In the teaching profession, beginning teachers have legitimate learning needs that cannot be met in advance, as a part of the college setting, or outside the contexts of actual classroom teaching (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Stronge, 2002).

Induction and Support for Beginning Teachers

High achieving school systems in other countries induct new teachers into the profession following vigorous undergraduate and graduate preparation through a process focusing on experiences (Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005, p. 66). Teaching

skills are developed under the mentoring of more skilled and experienced colleagues.

Many researchers and educational reformers are looking to other countries to learn from the ways they conduct teacher induction.

The same researchers who were looking at other countries, Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden (2005), present four characteristics of efficient induction programs:

1. All beginning teachers are assigned qualified mentors in their teaching field who are regularly available to coach and model good instruction.
2. Beginning teachers have reduced teaching loads.
3. The program lasts at least one year.
4. A sound assessment of teaching skills guides the induction progress, and a careful review of practice completes the induction program (p. 66-67).

They state that induction may variously be presented as a process as cursory as a short orientation, touring around the school with rules and procedures explained briefly, or it may be a more thorough, detailed process involving an experienced mentor who serves as a coach in providing support as a role model for the new teacher and help with the hard realities of the classroom.

Induction training serves, as mentioned earlier, to reduce anxiety for new teachers. It can also lead to increased retention of a higher-quality teaching force, a shared teaching culture throughout the district, and improved student achievement (Breux & Wong, 2003, p. 94). In the light of recent efforts at educational reform and its emphasis on interconnecting the school organization, political frameworks, and teacher needs (Elmore, 2005; Fuller, 2003; Troman & Woods, 2001), a sound teacher induction

program can provide a much-needed component. According to the study, “What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future,” “recruiting, preparing, and retaining good teachers is the central strategy for improving our schools” (cited in Breaux & Wong, 2003, p. 6). The restructuring of teacher education programs, schools, and educational policies may be necessary to meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind legislation. As a parallel benefit, dealing with classroom realities through an induction and mentoring program can help with reducing new teacher turnover.

The Advent of Teacher Induction Programs

In reaction to concern regarding teacher shortages and the problem of new teacher attrition, many school systems implemented programs aimed at easing the transition into the profession. New teacher induction programs were introduced in the early and middle 1980s, were popularized in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and are an expected standard today. Assigning a mentor to work with a beginning teacher during the first years in the profession is a cornerstone of new teacher induction programs.

A mentor is an experienced person who guides and counsels a new employee in an organization. Heller (2004) defines mentoring as “an ongoing process in which individuals in an organization provide support and guidance to others who can become effective contributors to the goals of the organization” (p. 1). Fletcher, Strong and Villar (2008) describe a mentor as “an experienced, successful, and knowledgeable professional who willingly accepts the responsibility of facilitating professional growth and support of a colleague through a mutually beneficial relationship” (p. 2). In the past,

mentoring relationships developed naturally between new teachers and experienced, benevolent colleagues. Recognizing the value of such relationships, schools and school organizations have attempted to implement structured programs to ensure every novice teacher has a mentor. Unfortunately, the benefits of voluntary, authentic mentoring relationships that develop naturally cannot be easily realized in a mandated program (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Tellez, 1992). Too often, an assigned mentor regards the novice teacher as another chore to add to the list; in such cases, the pairing does not benefit either party.

Goals for mentoring programs vary across locales, but typically include (a) retaining new teachers, (b) easing the transition into the profession, and (c) instructional improvement (Heller, 2004; Odell & Ferraro, 1992). Additional goals may include transmitting the culture of the profession or school and promoting the overall well being of novices (Hardy and Lingard, 2008). One cautionary note is that program planners should set realistic goals for a mentoring program (Heller, 2004). Mentoring relationships alone cannot overcome all obstacles to a successful year of teaching because, for example, a mentor cannot change the fact that a novice may have a difficult teaching assignment in the first place. In these cases, and potentially others, the mentor could be considered only a mitigating factor.

Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring (BTIM): Essential Considerations

BTIM was developed with the recognition that an induction program should certainly include an orientation to the school district and policy awareness as vital

ingredients, but should also encompass the professional core philosophies that are central to the success of developing and retaining effective practitioners. The elementary teacher's professional core philosophies comprise required concepts, skills, and attitudes needed to guide developmentally appropriate learning experiences for elementary pupils (Blasé & Kirby, 2002; Cockburn, 2000). To meet the breadth of interests and needs of children at all age levels, elementary teachers must have a thorough theoretical and practical understanding and knowledge base as facilitators of learning in the contemporary global community. Reflective, professional teachers must be prepared as generalists capable of handling the entire scope and sequence of the elementary curriculum, possess a certain orientation to cultural diversity, and be equipped with the competencies and technological literacy essential to teaching all students according to their own individual learning styles and learning differences (Blasé & Kirby, 2002; Cockburn, 2000). As each teacher masters the professional core philosophies, the district may create cohesive and collaborative instructional teams (Lipton & Wellman, 2003).

High-quality mentoring is defined as structured mentoring from a carefully selected teacher or teachers who work in the same field or subject as the new teacher, who are trained to coach new teachers, and who can help improve the quality of teachers' practices in light of the considerations above. Mentors guide and support the work of novice teachers by observing them in the classroom, offering them feedback, demonstrating effective teaching methods, assisting with lesson plans, and helping teachers analyze student work and achievement data to improve their instruction (Troman & Woods, 2001). The power of growth in and out of the classroom can be

shown with Lipton's recommendations that a successful mentoring program will be integrated with the implementation of other school and district initiatives (Lipton, 2002, Villanik 2002; Wood & McQuarrie, 1999; Youngs, 2002). Mentoring and induction programs operating in isolation often provide only additional stress and management burdens to educators who are already struggling with time and resource issues. Mentoring programs that work in concert with other initiatives, however, are usually more beneficial. For example, information about instructional strategies may be framed within the context of content-specific learning initiatives already in place. Thoughtful conversations about educational practice establish forms for learning. Mentoring relationships should provide opportunities for thinking out loud, sharing information, solving problems, and creating novel approaches to working with students. Ideally, the learning between the mentor and mentee is reciprocal, affording renewal for experienced teachers and increased confidence for novices (Lipton, 2002). At the same time, the new teacher needs help with the task of teaching. He or she is developing lesson plans, planning for parent conferences, deciding what assessments to use for grading, and learning how to help students with special needs. An experienced teacher can help problem solve the specific case that deals with the task and thus reduce the stress level (Bleach, 2001). When these processes are incorporated as a component of an overall district strategy for instructional improvement, everyone benefits.

The work of Peggy Smith also is an indicator that there are definite components of a quality integrated program (Smith, 2002). These components of the mentoring piece include: a trusted, respected, confidential, supportive relationship between the mentor

and the mentee; time for the two to interact; and a specific and selective process for the training of the mentor. The professional development component needs to have incorporated standards-based professional development, training in best practices, and an understanding that teacher learning best occurs in a collaborative environment (Smith, 2002).

Smith also comments that in strong induction programs, common planning time is regularly scheduled. This time helps teachers connect what and how they teach with improving student achievement, and it occurs in a collaborative culture (Smith, 2002). Such strategies may include how to develop lesson plans, how to interpret and use student assessment data, and how to employ collaborative models to increase student achievement.

Ongoing professional development is embedded into activities, including regular seminars and meetings that provide opportunities for teachers to improve their skills (Smith, 2002). Professional development should meet teachers' needs for expanding content knowledge, improving ability to teach literacy and numeracy, addressing diverse learning needs, and managing student behavior (Smith, 2002). Another piece of support needed by the new teacher and tied to the task of teaching is critical reflection (Udelhofen & Larson, 2003). Critical reflection by the new teacher can aid in developing independent problem-solving abilities (Bleach, 2001; Udelhofen & Larson, 2003). A strong teacher can identify and address individual students' learning problems or strengths. Such a teacher identifies the problem and analyzes it to develop a variety of solutions. Such critical reflection might involve such fundamental questions as, "How

will I know my students have learned what I am trying to teach?” (Udelhofen & Larson, 2003).

It is worth noting at this point that new teacher induction programs are not a cure-all (Gordan & Maxey, 2000). They will not overcome major problems within a school such as misplaced teachers, overloaded teaching schedules, or overcrowded classrooms (Gordan & Maxey, 2000). They also will not usually turn around teachers who lack the potential to achieve master-teacher status (Gordan and Maxey, 2000). It is critical that those involved in induction programs understand both the potential and the limitations of these programs.

Characteristics of Beginning Teachers and Psychological Stages of a Novice Teacher

The problems and concerns of the teachers in this case study frequently reflected those described in the beginning teacher literature (Basile ,2006). However, these beginning teachers had the support of mentors, which a number of studies recommend.

The research base on beginning teacher development is relatively recent. One of the first books on beginning teachers was a compilation of case studies written by first-year teachers. In this work, the editor, Barth (1990), writes that “since there is such a paucity of research on the first year of a teacher, I was forced to draw heavily on my own six years of work with beginning teachers” (p. xii). He asserts that “the cliché “teachers are born, not made” has trapped generations of educators into meaningless

argument, and it runs contrary to all we know about human growth and development.”
(p. 166).

Limited experience and the need to quickly become leaders in a classroom have long been recognized as impacting the survival experience of many beginning teachers.

As Barth states,

Much of the first year’s experience-based learning is gleaned from the trial-and-error method. This is a hard way to learn: hard on both the teacher and the students. Also, trial-and-error learning does not insure that the beginning teacher is actually learning things which make *her* a better teacher (p.170).

As a result of this trial-and-error approach, many beginning teachers soon question their personal ability to succeed, their commitment to teaching, and their fellow teachers’ commitment to them. According to Lambert (2003), they ask,

“Can I get through the day in one piece?”

“Can I make it until the end of the week?”

“Can I make it until the next vacation?”

“Can I really do this kind of work day after day?”

“Will I be accepted by my colleagues?” (pp. 7-8).

With very little support, beginning teachers frequently focus inward, not realizing that exploring problems with peers or others might offer opportunities to broaden and give greater definition to their teaching experiences.

Rubenstein (2007) observes that children and the educational community bear the costs of the beginning teacher's difficulties. Research using the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory (MTAI) reveals that positive attitudes toward teaching rise during pre-service preparation and student teaching and peak in the early weeks of the beginning year. However, they tend to fall dramatically during the first four or five months and then begin a slow upward rise, but they never again become as positive as they were. Rubenstein suggests that early unsuccessful and unpleasant experiences could lead these teachers to develop negative attitudes toward children and to reduce their long-term commitment to the profession (p.8).

In an effort to understand and help beginning teachers, a number of researchers have formulated developmental frameworks for the pre-service teacher and the in-service teacher. Basile, (2006) summarizes and evaluates a number of these stage models, namely, models for the pre-service teacher: Fuller (2003), Schwill and Dynak (2000) and Reiman and Thies-Sprinthall (1998). Models for the inservice teacher are enumerated in Lambert (2003), Ashdown, Hummel-Rossi and Tobia (2006), and Boreen, J., and Nidday (2000). Within the last thirty to forty years, training has been organized to meet each developmental stage: the pre-service teacher, the novice, and the experienced teacher. Lambert (2003) suggests that the developmental research on teachers has promoted the idea that "teachers can become lifelong students of their own teaching, taking satisfaction from gradual progress toward maturity" (p. 781). However, Basile argues that adult development and teacher development are not fully articulated concepts. He states,

Accepting the premise that teachers are different in some important ways is prerequisite to supporting their development differently. A number of strategies were discussed to promote teacher development, but it is clear that much work needs to be done before a fully articulated education program from teacher developments will be ready for implementation. Training programs should have continual, developmental evaluation. There needs to be clarification of the nature of teacher changes and the process by which this change is brought about (p. 213-4).

Basile's focus on teaching attributes rather than on specific problems shows that understanding both skills and attitudes is important as we explore how teachers change and under what conditions. Lambert's (2003) summary of Basile's work is helpful. Building on three stages of development—survival, adjustment, and the mature stage—Basile (2006) classifies teacher attributes into the following two categories:

1. Job related skills, knowledge, and behavior (knowledge of teaching activities, knowledge of the teaching environment, professional insight and perception, and approach to curriculum and instruction);
2. Attitudes and outcomes (changing images of teaching; professional confidence, security, and maturity; and willingness to try new things; p. 779).

Although it is helpful to delineate the two categories, it is also important to remember that the two categories are intricately interrelated. As beginning teachers' knowledge increases, their professional confidence improves. As beginning teachers are

willing to try new things, their professional knowledge and approach to instruction broaden and become better defined.

Researchers continue to explore how teachers view teaching and how they change with experience. Rubenstein (2007) describes teacher preparation, especially student teaching, as the fantasy stage. In the same work, he describes a number of problems that the beginning teacher encounters: students, parents, administrators, fellow teachers, and instruction.

In a single case study of a beginning teacher, Dunne and Villani (2007) outline a number of familiar problems: a struggle with classroom control and management, unfamiliarity with the curriculum and students, pacing of lessons, a principal too busy to be helpful, and feelings of isolation even though the teacher is a member of a “teaching team.” The support provided to this teacher is again limited, and Dunne and Villani (2007) describe her frequently defensive actions. These actions, which are responses more than initiations, include: (1) environmental simplification, (2) stroke seeking and withdrawal, (3) context restructuring, (4) compromise and compliance, (5) skill improvement, (6) problem disownment, and (7) laughter and emotional release (p.75). Compromise and compliance are pervasive. The teacher compromises her values by “ignoring problems, selectively responding to them, and systematizing or routinizing aspects of the environment” (p.75). Dunne and Villani conclude that “the beginning teacher either makes a place within the institution or is crushed by it” (p. 219).

On the other hand, synthesizing the trends in the empirical literature, Johnson and Reiman (2007) questions this prevalent image of survival, suggesting that it is an

overgeneralization. Depending upon a teacher's preparation and initial entrance into the profession, the beginning years (which he designates as the first six years) can be characterized by "survival" *or* "discovery." In his own study of six female teachers who followed the classic path of entry (university study including teacher training), only one teacher described a painful beginning. In the same study, four other teachers entered teaching through substitute teaching and the university, and all the teachers found the entry painful (p. 41).

Basile (2006) proposes that the pre-service years and the first year are times "for learning the objective facts and features of situations and for gaining experience" and when "real-world experience appears to be far more important than verbal information." Sometime during the first year for some and during the second and third year for many is "when experience can meld with verbal knowledge," and when the teacher can see similarities across contexts. Episodic knowledge becomes important, and knowledge about when to ignore, break, or follow rules is developed. Context, rather than rules, guides behavior (p. 41).

In order for experience to meld with verbal knowledge, the environment that the beginning teacher enters must afford that teacher time for meaningful exchange with colleagues who have more experience. Russells' (2006) exploration of the studio concludes that teachers should be free to learn by doing "in a setting relatively low in risk with access to coaches who initiate students in the 'traditions of the calling' and help them, by 'the right kind of telling,' to see on their own behalf and in their own way what they need most to see" (p.17).

Beginning teachers are not in an apprentice situation, however. Upon completing their academic work, they assume the same responsibilities as the more experienced teachers in the building—and sometimes, even more difficult responsibilities. As Russells (2006) suggests, the teaching workplace is “not set up for the demanding tasks of initiation and education. Pressures for performance tend to be high, time at a premium, and mistakes costly” (p.37).

Basile favors rethinking the situations into which beginning teachers are placed.

[It] seems odd to expect the novice teacher to have responsibility for a full teaching load, with responsibility for managing and teaching the same number of children as the more competent, proficient, or expert teacher. Even more worrisome is that the competent, proficient, and expert teachers sometimes take the classes and students that are easiest to teach, leaving for the novice and advanced beginner the most difficult. This is a sure way to keep the dropout rate for teachers in their first five years of teaching as high as it is currently (p. 61).

[The beginning year] is a time when receiving emotional support, learning to perceive, and learning routinization of certain classroom processes may be most important. It is a time for acquiring experience for reflection, for sharing that experience, for having someone who helps direct perception to that which is important (p. 62).

Furthermore, Basile maintains that school districts and universities “ought to be able to tell new teachers long before school opens what grade or courses they should be prepared to teach. But in that most vulnerable first year, novices often do not know what

they will be teaching, have no lesson scripts or lesson prototypes to rely on, and are given little planning time during the instructional day.” Universities “may have to redesign their teacher education programs and take responsibility for their graduates during their first three years on the job” (pp.62–63).

A number of researchers recommend additional training and support (See Basile, 2006; Dunne and Villani, 2007, Lambert, 2003; Rubenstein, 2007). To temper the transition from student to teacher, Dunne and Villani recommend that teacher education should include “skills necessary for institutional survival” and that schools should rethink the “school context into which first-year teachers are thrown.” Beginning teachers, Dunne and Villani state, should have the help of a teacher mentor as well as reduced teaching responsibilities. They should also have a study group that includes teacher educators and teachers who study practice (pp. 234–35).

Matching beginning teachers with mentors who will support them during their transition from their undergraduate program to their first teaching position is one way we can begin to change the context that the beginning teachers enters.

School Culture

The beginning teacher literature and especially social construction theory argue that learning takes place both within the individual and within a culture. The teachers in the present study spoke in detail about their schools, and how they felt both limited and supported by their cultures. They also expressed their desire to make connections with other teachers in their building, especially as they grew more comfortable in their teaching role.

While formally matching beginning teachers with mentors changes the context into which teachers enter the profession, I believe this change is limited. Mentors and beginning teachers work within the broader context of a school culture. As the teachers in the present study struggled to understand their particular school, the general atmosphere, the school policies, and the values of its members, mentors did not always have easy answers to explain its complex fabric.

As newcomers, the teachers brought their own personal needs and assumptions about groups and schools to their individual settings. The mentors tried to mediate the tensions these teachers felt when their needs were not met and their assumptions about groups and schools were challenged. As the new teachers came to understand their schools, sometimes they sought ways to influence the school's culture; at other times they reluctantly complied even though they continued to disagree with an aspect of the culture.

Social construction theory sees culture as both a construction and a forum. According to Bruner (1986),

A culture is constantly in process of being recreated as it is interpreted and renegotiated by its members. In this view, a culture is as much a forum for negotiating and renegotiating meaning and for explicating action as it is a set of rules or specifications for action.

It is the forum aspect of a culture that gives its participants a role in constantly making and remaking the culture: an active role as participants rather than as performing spectators who play out their

canonical roles according to rule when the appropriate cues occur (p. 123).

While Bruner provides a broad understanding of culture, it is Feiman-Nemser (2001), in his extensive review of the school culture literature updating an earlier review by Lortie (1975), who focus our attention on schools in particular. In their work, they reach the following conclusions:

First, the assumption that a uniform culture of teaching exists is not tenable.

Second, the study of teaching careers using male professionals and businessmen as templates has not done justice to teaching, an occupation dominated by women.

Third, following the lead of several social science disciplines, research on the cultures of teaching has begun to replace the image of a passive teacher molded by bureaucracy and buffeted by external forces with an image of the teacher as an active agent, constructing perspectives and choosing actions (Feiman-Nemser, 2003, pp. 522–23).

The three elementary schools represented in my case studies support Feiman-Nemser's first conclusion and provide data to explore the second and third. Although the three campuses organized students, teachers, and curriculum along similar lines, they had visibly different ways of supporting new teachers both formally and informally and reflected the range of possibilities also suggest by McLeskey and Waldron (2006).

The schools in this study were all elementary campuses. Heller (2004), in an elementary school case study, cites several themes that might predominate in an elementary setting staffed by female teachers:

1. Teachers recognize and resent the low social status of teaching, but they do not recognize the connections between teaching's reputation as women's work and its status. They do not view the classroom as a steppingstone to an advancement, but instead appreciate it for its content.
2. Teachers enjoy their autonomy, but frequently the bureaucracy and parents limit this autonomy.
3. While teachers enjoy their autonomy, they also want a sense of connection among colleagues. They attempt to build community through formal and informal mechanisms, including teams, faculty meetings, and the teacher's lounge.
4. Teachers resolve conflicts by unhappy compliance, the standoff, silent noncooperation, and open challenge. (pp. 2–3).

A number of these themes are reflected in the beginning teacher data. The teachers wanted autonomy to “find” their own style of teaching, but they also appreciated the formal and informal connections they had with the other teachers. They sought out certain teachers to emulate and avoided others. They asked teachers for their opinions when they disagreed with a policy. The beginners were more inclined to question policy, but mentors and other teachers did not encourage them in their

challenge even when they also disagreed with the policy. Some of the beginning teachers began to see parents and bureaucracy as obstacles to be accepted.

When the teachers discussed their views of their schools, they frequently talked about their principals. Kinne (2007) argues that principals play a significant role in defining and modeling their particular school culture, and Carter and Merchant (2004) state that principals vary greatly in how they define and model the school culture.

Barth (1990), in a case study of an elementary school, suggests ways a principal can respond to diverse individual interests and support the creation of different, yet shared, worlds. Helping teachers to focus on their individual dreams and concerns, Barth found ways for individuals to explore and bring those dreams closer to reality. One person's dream or ambition frequently became interwoven with those of others. In this way, Barth supported individual learning at the same time that he supported connected learning. Joseph and Reigeluth (2005) advocate creating schools as communities for thinking: "settings in which interpretation and complexity are the norm, and individuals are encouraged to express their differences of understanding while seeking common ground in the collective thought" (p. 1).

How to view learning as an interweaving of individuals who can both support and challenge understanding about teaching is a task that requires a broad understanding of groups, especially group dynamics. Hall and Hord (2006) suggest that group life is inherently paradoxical, and that "individual members experience the group as being filled with contradictory and opposing emotions, thoughts, and action that coexist inside the group. Group member's struggles to manage the tensions generated by these

contradictory and opposing forces create the essential process dynamics of group life” (2006, p. 111).

The paradoxes that Hall and Hord explore which are particularly relevant to newer teachers as they relate to the groups in their school are the paradoxes of dependency, boundaries, and regression. As the adult literature suggests, in order for an individual to learn, both independence and dependence are needed. Focusing more on group dynamics, Hall and Hord state:

In the human life cycle, growth involves the development of a good measure of independence. In a sense, our need for independence is actually driven by our needs for dependency. We break away from our families of origin so that we can create families of our own. In the severing and transformation of one set of dependencies, we become free to create new dependencies: upon spouses, upon our own children, upon networks created or chosen by us (p. 114).

Hall and Hord observe that interdependency develops when individuals are able to accept their dependency needs and trust that these needs will be met. Interdependency “provides the foundation upon which the notion of independence has its meaning” (p. 115). It is best defined in terms of relationships. The three teachers in the study spoke about different kinds of relationships that were helpful in dealing with their first year: relationships especially with their mentor, but also relationships with other teachers, their principals, their family members, and their friends.

The three teachers in the study slowly built patterns of dependency that evolved into interdependency. They wanted to establish close working relationships, both to learn and to feel accepted in their new adult roles. Formal structures in a school such as grade level, child study, and curriculum meetings were helpful.

The teachers did not always find it easy to be participants in their schools, but Bruner contends that if the beginner is an active partner in her own learning, she must also be an active partner in the forum that constantly recreates the culture of the school. He explains why this might be difficult.

It follows from this view of culture as a forum that induction into the culture through education, if it is to prepare the young for life as lived, should also partake of the spirit of a forum, of negotiation, of the recreating of meaning. But this conclusion runs counter to traditions of pedagogy that derive from another time, another interpretation of culture, another conception of authority: one that looked at the process of education as a transmission of knowledge and values by those who knew more to those who knew less and knew it less expertly (Bruner, 1986, p. 123).

The data in the present study speak little to the issue of how newer teachers affected their schools, but they do reveal the newer teacher's understanding of their schools, an understanding that broadened as it challenged and supported their individual understanding of teaching. Their stories document how they created their own meaning

about the world of teaching out of their understanding of themselves, of teaching, and of their schools.

Their narratives reflect many layers of their feelings and thoughts; some were clearly visible to me, some became visible with analysis, and others will be visible to readers as they read the cases themselves. Through stories, the teachers describe how their ambition to teach broadened, changed, and became more defined with experience and reflection. They describe how they were supported and not supported in their thinking and actions by their mentor, by professional and personal friends, and the culture of their school.

As Bruner suggests, I was listening to and writing about “people in the act of constructing a longitudinal version of Self,” as they learned to teach. As newer teachers, they encountered specific difficulties. The case study helps reveal how they thought through these difficulties with their mentors and others, and the actions they took which helped them begin the process of defining teaching for themselves and for others.

Among the many challenges new teachers face, dealing with the demands of the many committees that are designed to facilitate the induction process can be overwhelming in and of themselves. The emphasis on professional development activities that teachers are expected to participate in can actually undermine the effectiveness and the morale of a teacher (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000). Furthermore, most U.S. teachers only have three to five hours each week for planning. This leaves them with almost no regular time to consult or learn about new teaching strategies (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003); Udelhofen & Larson, 2003).

Susan Moore Johnson (2004) in the Harvard Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, analyzes three different school cultures for new teacher professional development. All of these cultures are grounded in the belief that teachers hold knowledge and power in the school and that students benefit when teachers assist each other and have a shared responsibility for student learning. The three cultures are the veteran-oriented culture, the novice-oriented culture and the integrated professional culture (Johnson, 2004).

The veteran-oriented professional culture is a culture that is set by experienced teachers (Johnson, 2004). In the culture, experienced teachers are independent and perform their role without attention to the needs of the new teachers in their building. Teachers in this culture have a “closed-door mentality” and independence and privacy are held dear. Because of this attitude, new teachers receive little feedback or mentoring and do not experience many classroom observations. Neither a new teacher’s need for help nor his ability to provide fresh ideas are recognized. Many times these new teachers feel isolated because of the dearth of structural collegial support. A struggle develops to maintain the new teacher’s motivation and idealism in a culture that does not value collaboration (Johnson, 2004).

The novice-oriented professional culture most often occurs in charter schools or low- performing schools where there is a high rate of teacher turnover (Johnson, 2004). In these schools there is a high proportion of inexperienced teachers who in turn decide the values and work mode of the learning organization. Long hours, innovation, invention, and sometimes a lack of an established organizational policy are a part of the

culture. In this culture new teachers fail to benefit from the wisdom and expertise of experienced teachers. Experienced staff who can serve as mentors is absent, leaving new teachers completely alone to decide on curricula, to meet with parents, and to plan lessons. New teachers are not able to observe experienced teaching and they receive very little feedback (Johnson, 2004). Mentoring is absent from the environment and without this help, the staff tends to continually reinvent rather than develop continuity in its teaching approach.

The integrated professional culture is defined as an environment that offers the new teacher professional inclusion and support (Johnson, 2004). There are no separate camps of experience; instead, teachers collaboratively share their knowledge and expertise. New teachers, who are prepared with the latest training in many areas and also need recognition for their expertise, are appropriately valued by more experienced colleagues. At the same time, in the integrated professional culture new teachers receive direct help with their classroom instruction. Teachers videotape their instruction and analyze the tapes with colleagues. In other areas these new staff members are also supported instead of being left to fail. For example, a guidance counselor may stand by as newer teachers make their first difficult call to a parent. Integrated professional cultures are interdependent. Talents and skills are optimized in this environment and challenges are jointly met (Johnson, 2004). The staff in this culture sets up a true professional learning community and sees itself as a team (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003).

Study group participation is also important for the newer teacher. Study groups focus on specific topics, such as running records or improving mathematics instruction.

They provide beginning teachers with collaborative problem-solving models (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, Roberts & Pruitt, 2003); Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000). In such groups novices hear how veteran teachers think about using and adapting instructional techniques.

Studies show that it is helpful to remember that newer teachers can also serve as important resources for a school (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000). New teachers may know more than veterans about certain instructional approaches, having studied the new technique in their teacher preparation curriculum. In certain disciplines—the sciences for example—a new teacher may also have more current knowledge than a colleague who has been teaching for ten to fifteen years (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000).

Summary

The work of Linda Darling-Hammond and John Bransford (2005) represents the theoretical framework of the research questions addressed by this study. Darling-Hammond and Bransford's research supports the understanding that new teachers continually construct new knowledge and skills through practice. With this understanding as a beginning point, it becomes important to help the novice become an adaptive expert who is prepared for lifelong learning that allows him or her to add to the pre-service knowledge and skills base. The authors state that efficiency and innovation can block one another (p. 262) and assert that "Letting go of previously learned ideas and routines or incorporating new ideas into practice—choosing what to abandon and

what to keep or modify—is a big part of what it means to be a lifelong learner and an adaptive expert” (p. 363). The “adaptive expert” philosophy becomes the framework to guide new teachers into the profession.

CHAPTER III

METHODS—A CASE STUDY APPROACH

Introduction

I chose the case study approach in order to understand in depth how a few teachers experience their first two years of teaching when they are in a formal mentoring situation. Because of my background as a former teacher who developed portfolios on children in the classroom and used this both as a recordkeeping method and as a tool for teacher learning, I knew that this method could capture the human face of policy implementation in the field.

Case study is known as a triangulated research strategy. Snow and Anderson (cited in Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991) asserted that triangulation can occur with data, investigators, theories, and even methodologies. Stake (1995) stated that the protocols that are used to ensure accuracy and alternative explanations are called triangulation. The necessity for the qualitative research method of triangulation arises from the ethical need to confirm the validity of the processes. In case studies, this can be done by using multiple sources of data (Yin, 2005), and this is the procedure to be done in this study. Using journal stems, questionnaires, and interviews, the researcher will seek to obtain internal validation and a comprehensive view of the data gathered.

Yin (2005) presented at least four applications for a case study model. I have listed each application, noting in parenthesis how each directly applies to the purpose of this study:

1. To explain complex causal links in real-life interventions (this study examines second-year teacher's perceptions of their involvement in the BEST program and how they believe the program did or did not contribute to their feelings of self-efficacy and job satisfaction as teachers);
2. To describe the real-life context in which the intervention has occurred (this case study prefaces each participant's data with a contextual analysis of the school campus and descriptors relating to demographics of students and teachers, PEIMS data, and all relevant factors);
3. To describe the intervention itself (this study describes in detail the history of the BEST program from its inception to its current form and all the practices relating to it, with specific description of the program's implementation in the school district and campuses where the study's subjects are employed);
4. To explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear set of outcomes (this study employs journal stems to elicit feelings and perceptions of the second-year teachers in relation to the BEST program).

Additionally, this study employed purposeful sampling by identifying a particular district for the study, as well as particular subjects within that district.

According to Creswell (2003) and Patton (2002), purposeful sampling involves the selection of those subjects, usually small in number, who can offer the most insight into

a particular setting or phenomenon. Unlike probability sampling, purposeful sampling allows for an emphasis on in-depth understanding. Purposeful sampling does, however, limit the generalizability of results (Creswell, 2003) which was discussed in Chapter I.

When selecting participants for this case study, the researcher used information-oriented sampling, as opposed to random sampling (Flyvbjerg, B., 2007, pp. 219–245). The population chosen for this study consisted of three second-year teachers in New Oaks ISD who have been in the new teacher induction program, along with the director of the teacher induction program. The number of participants was based on a suggestion from the BEST program director in response to the researcher's request for a list of second-year teachers who might be willing to participate in the study. From the list of ten names provided by the BEST director, three participants were chosen by the researcher. Three is also a number that lends itself to triangulation, and since all participants were in the same school district, it was posited that this quantity would yield enough variety for a study of the program in a single school district.

The data collection for this study was conducted between March and June of 2009. Prior to the collection of data, the researcher contacted the New Oaks (a pseudonym for the actual school district) Independent School District's Director of Curriculum for consent. The researcher presented the Director of Curriculum with a written proposal for the study through e-mail. Prior to collecting data, the researcher coordinated with the Director of Curriculum and the BEST program administrator to confirm the process by which the data collection would occur. The BEST program administrator provided potential participant names and contact information for the

researcher to use in contacting the participants (early March 2009). After verbal consent, which included making participants aware of the purpose of the study, was gained from the participants, the researcher provided a consent form (Appendix C) for the participants to sign (mid-March 2009). In keeping with the study's commitment to anonymity, participants were not informed of the identity of other participants, nor were they informed how many others were participating in the study. The researcher e-mailed a questionnaire to each participant for completion sometime prior to the first interview, and scheduled a time and date for the first interview (mid-March 2009). Weekly reflective journals were completed by the participants during the month of April. The second and final interview took place during June 2009. The interviews were audio recorded. In addition, the researcher took notes during the interview to aid in the analysis of the transcribed interviews.

This investigation was predicated on the assumption that the support of an experienced mentor would affect how new teachers regarded their role and how they employed various teaching strategies in the classroom. It was also predicated on the belief that beginning teachers are individuals who bring a rich array of skills, expectations, attitudes, and values to their new role. As first-year teachers, they enter into a new context: their specific classroom and campus. They have to create ways to deal with the discontinuities between their skills, expectations, attitudes, and values and the realities of their classroom and their school—schools that vary in collegiality and congeniality toward experimentation (McLeskey and Waldron, 2006).

Yin (2005) suggests that “case studies are the preferred strategy when:

1. 'How' or 'why' questions are being posed;
2. When the investigator has little control over events and;
3. When the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context."

Since the questions addressed in the present investigation are primarily those of how newer teachers think and take action within a formal mentoring program, the cases are exploratory and descriptive. However, it is difficult to explore questions of "how" without collecting data that elucidate the "why." Insofar as these case studies shed light on the "why," they are explanatory in nature.

The present study utilized the grounded theory method (Glazerman et al., 2008) through theoretical sampling: "the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges" (p. 45). "Theoretical sampling is done in order to discover categories and their properties and to suggest the interrelationships into a theory" (p. 62). The inductive nature of the grounded theory method is described by Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen (1993):

You are not putting together a puzzle whose picture you already know. You are constructing a picture which takes shape as you collect and examine the parts. The process of data analysis is like a funnel: things are open at the beginning (or top), and more directed and specific at the bottom. The qualitative researcher plans to use part of the study to learn what the important questions are. He or she does not assume that enough

is known to recognize important concerns before undertaking the research (p. 29).

Research Design

Sample Selection

My original intent was to include four teachers. However, because a very limited number of newer teachers met the study criteria and volunteered to participate in the case study, the number was reduced to three. Because this is a qualitative study, rather than a quantitative one, I concluded that data from these teachers could still provide sufficient individual contrasts while allowing for substantial data to be collected on individuals. Data was collected simultaneously in an effort to better understand the outcomes experienced by the second-year teachers.

Selection Criteria

The beginning teachers in the study met six common criteria:

1. They were participants in the BEST new teacher induction program during their first year of teaching;
2. They were in their second year of teaching within the school district selected for the case study;
3. They had mentors who had been selected by the school district to be mentors;

4. The mentors had all completed at least a basic mentor training program provided by the district through the mentor training component of the BEST program;
5. They were part of a group of ten teachers identified by the BEST program director;
6. They volunteered to participate in the current investigation.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to the collection of data, the researcher applied to and received permission to conduct research on human subjects from the Institutional Review Board committee of the sponsoring institution. Once this documentation was in hand, the researcher contacted the district Director of Curriculum for consent to do research in the school district. Through e-mail, the researcher presented the New Oaks ISD Director of Curriculum with a written proposal for the study. After several communications, meetings, and submission of a formal application to a committee to conduct research in the district, permission was granted for the study by New Oaks ISD (Appendix F).

Prior to collecting data, the researcher coordinated with the school district's director of curriculum and the BEST program administrator and confirmed the process by which the data collection was to occur. After the researcher provided a description of the type of subject needed to provide data for this study, the BEST program administrator provided a list of ten names of potential participants who met the criteria described by the researcher, along with contact information for the researcher to use in contacting the participants (early March 2009). It is important to note that the researcher

did not impose any limits on the number of names to be provided; the BEST program director developed the list of names based solely on the researcher's description of the type of subjects needed for this research. Of the ten potential participants submitted by the BEST program director, six either did not answer the researcher's queries or declined, four accepted, and one was forced to withdraw from the study before it began, because of personal reasons. The researcher was not personally acquainted with any of the participants prior to the beginning of the study. By selecting three of the ten possible participants and not identifying those involved in the BEST program director, the researcher believes that confidentiality and anonymity were better maintained on behalf of the participants.

Beginning teachers face far greater job insecurity than experienced teachers because they do not hold tenure and can be dismissed without extensive review. For these reasons, I was particularly sensitive to issues of confidentiality, including preserving the participants' anonymity with respect to all other school district personnel. In their discussions of their first year of teaching, the beginning teachers were dealing with sensitive issues as they shared information on individual children, parents, teachers, and administrators. In an effort to preserve confidentiality, initials, rather than names, were used when notes were taken from the second-year teacher interviews. Additionally, the teachers were asked to use initials rather than names in their journaling. These documents were kept confidential, but the use of initials added another level of anonymity and security.

After verbal consent was gained from the participants, the researcher provided a consent form (Appendix C) for the participants to sign.(mid-March 2009). The researcher then provided a questionnaire via e-mail for the participants to fill out prior to the first interview and set up a time and date for the first interview.(mid-March 2009). Weekly reflective journals were completed by the participants during the month of April. The second and final interview took place in May 2009. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed. In addition, the researcher took notes during the interview to aid in the analysis of the transcribed interviews.

Additionally, each teacher participant received initial, informal contact requesting participation in the study via e-mail (Appendix E).

Data were collected simultaneously in an effort to better understand the outcomes experienced by the second-year teachers. One questionnaire, followed by two interviews with each participant provided the initial data gathering opportunities. Subsequently, I reviewed four reflective journal entries completed by each participant during four separate weeks.

Data collection and analysis in this study employed several measures that attempted to validate the findings of the research. Use of comparative data involves exploring the same research questions through several methods and sources (Creswell, 2003), and this particular study gathered comparative data through the use of a questionnaire, electronic journaling, and interviews.

Data Collection

Procedural Overview

Capturing the circumstances and conditions through triangulation using a variety of methods adds rigor, breadth, and depth to the research. Triangulation also helps to increase confidence in results and build a confirmatory edifice in the interpretation of the data by using multiple approaches within a single study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Triangulation in this study was accomplished through building an in-depth perspective by assessing data at the district level available through the Internet, by performing the second-year teacher interviews, questionnaires and journal entries, and by using a variety of methods to collect and analyze the data. Merriman (1998) and Denzin & Lincoln (2003) support the use of multiple sources of data or multiple methods to confirm and secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

Interviews

Two interviews formed the basis of the data collection from the three second-year teachers. The construction of the interviews was grounded in my experience in interviewing parents, teachers, principals, and mentors in my graduate-level coursework, as well as that of my internship in the mentoring and supervision program. Prior to beginning the interviews, I expanded my knowledge of the interview technique through readings in the field, especially Glesne (1999), Reiman and Thies-Sprinthall (1998), which clarified ways of dealing with the effect of the interview method on the data collected. In addition to these readings, I attended a training seminar as part of my

doctoral coursework that explored the differences between a questioner and a facilitator of dialogue. My interview questions for the teachers were designed to capture the aspects of each second-year teacher's experiences, perceptions, and feelings with respect to teaching and the current induction program (BEST). My goal was to minimize the number of questions and focus on the quality of the questioning in terms of depth.

According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), "The interviewing relationship is a research partnership between the interviewer and one respondent" (p. 65). When conducting the interview, it was important to build a trusting relationship such that the interaction between the researcher and participants is genuine and not daunted by the presence of an outsider to the classroom. Prior to the first interview, I communicated through e-mail with each research participant to enlighten them on the purpose behind the study in order to establish a more comfortable and closer working relationship. Two separate one-on-one interviews were conducted and tape recorded with each participant. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed after the completion of each round and submitted to the respective individuals for member checking. Detailed field notes were taken at each interview to add support and depth to the actual taped interviews. During the member-checking process for the transcribed interviews and the transcribed field notes, none of the participants expressed concerns, questions, or disagreement with any of the data.

Rubenstein (2007) espouses a narrative approach, stating:

Researchers frequently note that teachers' knowledge is concrete, situational, particular, and holistic. This suggests that the research designed to reveal and to engage teachers' thinking should be structured to capture these qualities (p.ii).

Therefore, in the initial interview, I encouraged teachers to "tell their story," while I listened and asked primarily clarifying questions. The teachers described specific situations and spoke about their successes and failures.

My purpose was to describe the particular: to tell the stories of three teachers. My position as a researcher was always to try to hear the individual stories clearly and to celebrate the diverse worlds of teaching. Within my understanding of those diverse worlds, I wanted to explore some common themes that might further illuminate how newer teachers experience their first two years in the context of a formal mentoring program and also to elucidate the perceptions they had of that program during their second year. Throughout the entire interview process, I was looking for concrete descriptions from the respondents on the induction program they had experienced at New Oaks ISD using a fixed-question-open-response format in collecting empirical data.

Questionnaires

Open-ended questions (see Appendix A) allowed subjects' perceptions and opinions to be assessed without limiting them to a fixed scale or response (Patton, 2002). The intent of these types of questions was to lead to rich, in-depth dialogue that enhanced the researcher's understanding of the participant's perceptions of the BEST program.

Electronic Journaling

Each of the second-year teachers was e-mailed a set of journal prompts for each week to be completed when they had time. When they finished one set of prompts, the researcher e-mailed the next set of journal prompts. These journal stems (see Appendix D) and responses were kept in an electronic file and were used as a monitor of the second-year teachers' day-to-day satisfaction and feelings of competency as teachers in relation to how much help they perceived they were or were not getting from the BEST induction program in place in the New Oaks ISD.

Data Phenomena

Qualitative researchers attempt to understand phenomena through consistent interviews, observations, focus groups, and various other means to strengthen the study. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) state,

The naturalistic investigator cannot confine his or her attention to a few variables of interest, ignoring the setting because it has been so carefully controlled: he or she must take account of all factors and influences in the context. If anything may make a difference, then everything must be monitored (p. 191).

Yin (2005) states, "A case study's focus should be to maximize four conditions related to design quality:

- a. construct validity

- b. internal validity
- c. external validity
- d. reliability (p. 19).”

Validity and reliability were established by the amount and type of evidence that was collected throughout this study to support the interpretations. Conclusions were drawn from the data obtained.

Establishing research that is viewed as respectable and valued is important in the trustworthiness achieved through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). “The purpose of research is not merely to collect data, but to use such data to draw warranted conclusions about the people (and others like them) on whom the data were collected” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 151). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were established through data collection (questionnaires and journal entries) and interviews. Credibility will establish that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an interactive model (Miles & Huberman 1994, p. 23). I analyzed and reviewed more literature as I collected, reduced the data, and wrote the case study text. The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of second-year teachers in regards to their involvement in the district induction program. The data collection methods specified addressed the study’s purpose through examination of the research question.

CHAPTER IV

THE CASE STUDY SITE AND THE PARTICIPANTS

Characteristics of the Case Study Sites

District Characteristics

Information in the tables below provide an overall picture of the case-study district. The student performance indicators reported for this study include the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) passing rates by subject, attendance rates, dropout rates, and statistics related to college admissions. Accountability ratings are reported for the districts and schools to the state.

New Oaks ISD comprises 453 square miles and has an enrollment of 15,000 students. According to the Texas Education Agency's 2008–09 Academic Excellence Indicator System district profile, the district spends \$8,393 per year on each student, with total expenditures of \$121,659,653. The assessed property value per student is \$189,039, and the 2008 assessed tax rate was \$1.29 per \$100 in assessed valuation. Revenue sources for the school district include state funds (50%), local funds (49%), and federal funds (1%).

New Oaks ISD employs 1,056 teachers, of whom 845 are female. This is 80% of the teachers in the district, compared with the statewide average of 77% female teachers (TEA Academic Excellence Indicator System, 2008–09 district profile).

The elementary school campuses where the subjects of this study taught (hereafter, School A, School B, and School C) all met state targets of 100% in each of the following areas:

1. Percentage of Teachers Highly Qualified in All Subjects They Teach
2. Percentage of Classes Taught by Highly Qualified Teachers
3. Percentage of Teachers Receiving High-Quality Professional Development
(2006–07 and 2007–08 only)

Table 1 shows the percentage of students by their ethnic origins.

Table 1: Ethnicity Demographics

Campus	American or Alaskan Native (%)	Asian or Pacific Islander (%)	Black, Not of Hispanic Origin (%)	Hispanic (%)	Caucasian/White, Not of Hispanic Origin
School A	0.2	1.2	28.8	58.5	11.4
School B	0.2	1.4	32.8	31.0	34.6
School C	0.0	0.9	11.1	14.4	73.6

The number and percentage of teachers with 1–5 years of experience on the three campuses of the subjects of this study are as follows in Table 2:

Table 2: New Teacher Percentages on Campuses in This Study

<i>School</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
School A	6	18.5%
School B	8	32.9%
School C	3	7.8%

TEA Accountability Ratings

With the passage of House Bill 72 in 1984, the Texas legislature called for a system of accountability based primarily on student learning. The Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) emerged from that effort and has undergone significant change in the last 24 years. The report serves as a basis for comparison of school performance across the state of Texas and contains information on districts, schools, educators, and millions of students. Table 3 shows the ratings of the schools used in this study.

Table 3: TEA Accountability Ratings New Oaks ISD Campuses Involved in Study

Campus	Accountability Rating 2007–08
School A	Academically Unacceptable
School B	Academically Acceptable Gold Performance Acknowledgements: Comparable Improvement: Reading/ELA
School C	Recognized Gold Performance Acknowledgements: Commended: Writing Commended: Science

From the information contained in the AEIS, the division also develops and implements the state accountability rating system used to rate Texas public schools and school districts. The state accountability rating system includes campuses and districts rated according to standard and alternative education accountability (AEA) procedures.

By statute, the AEIS Report for 2007–08 includes performance and profile sections for all campuses in NEW OAKS ISD in the same format as it was received from TEA, to guarantee a uniform appearance across the state. A glossary of terms is included to assist in the interpretation of goals and data.

Individual Campuses and Mentoring

The following campus descriptions illustrate the different ways in which the three schools of the second-year teachers in this study bring their human and other resources to bear on creating a mentoring culture to support new teachers. The school-wide components of each campus's approach, as a result, extend the benefits of mentoring to many other members of the faculty, beyond the new teachers. Names of the campuses are withheld to preserve anonymity.

School A

In this elementary school, the philosophy and practice of mentoring is integrated into the school's implementation of a district-wide initiative: a comprehensive effort to transform the district into a model district actively engaged in the practices of a high-performance learning community. Beginning teachers at School A are assigned an individual mentor. Additionally, the individual veteran teachers besides the mentor are asked to work with new teachers one-on-one to improve the new teachers' skills or knowledge of a particular task or activity, according to the veteran teachers' particular expertise or experience in a given area.

The BEST program director, a second source of mentoring support, works with both new and veteran teachers individually and in small groups. The program director is

a central office-based instructional specialist and is considered by the principals a “master mentor teacher.” Principals further rely on the director to provide a full array of assistance to any teacher in the form of model teaching, coteaching, resource acquisition, and more. The BEST director also uses a peer coaching approach to provide assistance in the area of literacy, which is a special curriculum focus across the New Oaks school district. She provides mentoring to individual teachers and also works with groups of teachers through dialogue about instructional strategies and hands-on materials development.

A third source of mentoring for the entire faculty of School A comes in the form of group meetings led by the principal and the BEST program director. Weekly grade level (horizontal) team meetings and subject area-based (vertical) cadre meetings serve as mini-staff development sessions.

School B

All new teachers are assigned an individual mentor in School B as well. According to the principal, the goal for the relationship is “similar to what we want to achieve in student advisory [arrangements]: to have a person a new teacher feels comfortable coming to with any problem.” If at all possible, a beginning teacher is matched with a veteran teacher who teaches the same grade level. This personal mentor contacts his or her protégé as early as possible in the summer before school, to get acquainted. From the first day of the school year to the last, the mentor provides day-to-day support in key areas of materials acquisition, classroom management, and curriculum and instruction.

Scheduling time and allocation of classroom space are used in School B to facilitate a second source of mentoring through regular, focused opportunities for other teachers to interact with beginning staff. Classroom assignments are clustered to create grade-level hallways, and grade-level teams have a common lunch period. The grade-level team, which shares most if not all of the same students, also has a common planning and preparation period. Overall, the strong team structure facilitates regular interaction between the beginning teacher and veteran faculty and allows for cross-team cooperation on behalf of individual students.

As at School A, the BEST program director is a third source of mentoring support to all new teachers in School B. In addition to coordinating campus participation in any centralized mentoring activities (such as documentation of mentoring or facilitating mentor attendance at the district-provided training session), the BEST director meets occasionally with each new teacher both during the first year at the campus and during the second year in the district, although second-year teachers meet less often. The content of the meetings varies according to teacher needs, ranging from acquainting them with campus initiatives relevant to their teaching area, to assisting with lesson planning, to providing organizing tips.

Finally, a school-wide faculty study program engages all teachers in reading, discussing, and applying the ideas presented in a current, well-regarded book on education. Discussions take place weekly by teaching team and, once a month, in a meeting of the entire faculty. The teachers believe that, in addition to serving as a collaborative professional development strategy, the BEST program creates a common

bond between the mentor and beginning teacher as they study together. Furthermore, the program “sets a climate and tone so that new teachers can approach anyone on the campus” with a question or a problem.

School C

This campus profile is virtually identical to School B. As research was being conducted through interviews of the participant at this campus and by talking with office staff, it at first seemed curious to me how similar the new teachers’ programs were between campuses. Of course, since the campuses are in the same school district and all under the same BEST program director, those aspects might be expected to be consistent, but I found it surprising that even the way the principal asked veteran teachers to interact with new teachers was the same as in School B. However, the similarity made sense when I found that the principal at School C was new to the campus during the school year of the study, and that she had just moved over from School B, where her efforts as principal were praised by the district: The school, in three years under this principal’s direction, moved from having an academic rating of “Academically Unacceptable” to “Recognized.” Among other factors, this principal credits the mentoring that the new teachers received as a key reason for the success of the school. “The new teachers were hired into a failing school before and had the ‘survival’ mode as their main mode of operation. The veteran teachers, with training and encouragement, turned the attitudes of the new teachers into that of a shared challenge, a goal that everyone on the entire school team had of turning the school around for the sake of the students.”

The Context of Texas Teacher Induction Programs

Since 1989, the state of Texas has experimented with mentoring for beginning teachers as a strategy to encourage and facilitate the retention of teachers through their first years in the profession. In 1990, when the state created its alternative certification program, mentoring was included as a requirement for all alternatively certified teachers; and in 1991, the requirement was mandated (although not funded by the state) for all teachers during their induction year. In 1995 this requirement was challenged by legislation that would release districts from their obligation to comply with unfunded mandates. This legislation, however, did not result in a change in the Texas Education Code. Further state-level recommendations regarding mentoring were included in the Texas State Board of Educator Certification's (SBEC) 1996 strategic plan, which stipulated that all educators granted a conditional teaching certificate have the support of a mentor during their two-year induction period. This recommendation, too, was not funded or otherwise supported by the state. As of September 1, 1999, the Texas Education Code includes the following amendment to 19 TAC Chapter 230, Subchapter V, Induction for Beginning Teachers:

230.610. Induction Program for Beginning Teachers.

General provisions. Beginning teachers who do not have prior teaching experience shall be assigned a mentor teacher.

Induction training for beginning teachers. Beginning teachers shall participate in teacher orientation, which may include specialized induction year program activities.

After failing to gain state appropriations for the mentoring of beginning teachers, in 1999 SBEC sought and received funding from the U.S. Department of Education to pilot a support system named the Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS). The state agency began work funded by a three-year, \$12 million grant to develop and model a support and assessment system for beginning teachers.

The funding for TxBESS allowed a limited number of school districts to participate in the program. The New Oaks Independent school district (NOISD; a pseudonym for the actual district used in study) was one of the schools that initially received some funding from TxBESS in the school year 2000–02. This is when the Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS) program was begun in New Oaks ISD.

Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program (BTIM)

In an effort to increase retention of beginning teachers, the Texas Legislature (80th Texas Legislature, General Appropriations Act, Rider 73) authorized and funded the Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring (BTIM) program with appropriations in fiscal years 2008 and 2009. The first appropriation (\$15 million) funded 50 Cycle 1 grantee school districts and was distributed among approximately 470 campuses for use in the 2007–08 and 2008–09 school years.

BTIM Cycle 2 grantees were funded from a 2008 appropriation of \$15 million and began induction and mentoring programs in the 2008–09 school year. The program also works to provide support and training to mentor teachers and administrators.

BTIM Cycle 1 grants targeted school districts and open-enrollment charter schools with high rates of teacher attrition, high percentages of beginning teachers, high rates of teaching outside the field of certification, or high rates of beginning teachers in Texas Teacher Shortage Areas, which include those subject and geographic areas identified by the Texas Education Agency (2009, TEA) and the U.S. Department of Education as lacking sufficient numbers of educators. BTIM Cycle 1 grants required the districts to provide a minimum of a 20% financial match (based on total grant funding). Program funds could be used for professional development and support and training for mentor teachers. These funds also could be used to provide teacher stipends for participating mentors, substitute teacher pay and other resources to allow mentor teachers to devote time during the school day to observe and work with their beginning teachers. Although funds could not be used for administrator training, grantees' matching contributions could be used to fund this required activity.

Although all BTIM grantees were not required to use the same mentor training program, the grant stipulated that they implement TEA-approved programs that utilized adult learning strategies and prepared the mentor to assist their beginning teachers in classroom management, instructional pedagogy, student achievement, and collecting and analyzing data.

Mentor teachers were required to meet with their beginning teachers on a weekly basis, commencing at teacher orientation. The mentors were required to observe and assess their beginning teacher in the classroom. These observation sessions were an opportunity to guide the one-on-one time between the mentor and beginning teacher,

allowing the mentor teacher to provide the beginning teacher with feedback and offer strategies for improvement. The beginning teachers worked with their mentors to develop improvement plans to help meet professional standards. Additionally, grantee campuses were asked to support mentor teachers through regularly scheduled meetings with administration staff. All of those stipulations were already components of the BEST (TEA approved) program already established in New Oaks ISD, which qualified them to receive BTIM monies.

The headline from Aug. 13, 2007 in the *Texas Education Agency News*, read, “\$13 million granted to districts for beginning teacher induction and mentoring programs.” The article briefly outlined the stipulations of the grant: “Under the 2007-2008 Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring (BTIM) Program, eligible campuses will assign a qualified mentor teacher to each beginning teacher with less than two years of teaching experience. The goal of the program is to improve teacher quality and help teachers through their first years in the classroom. The beginning teacher induction and mentoring program centers on research-based strategies that indicate induction and mentoring are important components for stronger teacher retention and better preparation for teachers new to the profession.” (*Texas Education Agency News*, March 2007).

Under this grant, districts had the option of using their own mentor training curriculum so long as it meets the grant requirements, or they could select from one of 24 commissioner-approved providers.

Schools could use their grant funds for the following purposes:

- Mentor teacher stipends
- Scheduled time for mentor teachers to provide mentoring to assigned classroom teachers
- Mentoring support through providers of mentor training.

The grant funding came from legislation authorized by House Bill 1, 79th Texas Legislature, Third Called Session in 2006, to increase the retention of beginning teachers. The grant period covered funding for two school years, beginning August 1, 2007, and ending May 31, 2009.

Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS)

Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS) focused on support systems for beginning teachers in their first and second years on the job. The goals of the program were to increase teacher retention and develop professional expertise. Starting in spring of 2000, regional partnerships, led by the twenty Regional Education Service Centers of Texas, began piloting models of support designed to meet the needs of beginning teachers, students, and schools. While each Education Service Center and participating school district had discretion in planning and implementing mentoring activities that responded to local needs, TxBESS did institute certain program features.

1. First was feedback from assessments developed for early-career teachers using the TxBESS Activity Profile (TAP). The TAP served as a performance

assessment instrument to provide formative information for the beginning teacher and summative information for the teacher preparation program from which he or she graduated.

2. The second was a support team model in which the mentor teacher, an administrator, and a representative from an educator preparation program shared responsibility for mentoring the beginning teacher.
3. Third was training for the mentors and other support team members who would implement the TAP observation and assessment rubric.

Beginning Educators Support and Training (BEST) and Mentoring

The BEST Program, a nationwide initiative to enhance the effectiveness of new teachers, recognizes the importance of guiding not only the new teachers, but also those who mentor them. As a crucial part of the BEST program, Mentor Institute (MI) is designed to provide on-going professional development for mentors who will support/coach new teachers in an effort to retain highly qualified teachers. Follow-up sessions are held throughout the year to communicate any identified needs of the mentors and to plan for improvements for the following year. Mentor Institute (MI) Objectives include goals for mentor learning and practice. The goals stipulated in the Mentor Institute program are listed in Appendix G. In addition to the programs and objectives listed in Appendix G, there are duties and responsibilities required of the Mentors which are listed in Appendix H. The BEST program also holds “The First Class BEST Conference.” This conference is intended as a positive way to communicate

questions, suggestions, and congratulations to program participants. “Conference Managers” are assigned and review the postings to make sure that they comply with the BEST conference guidelines and the New Oaks ISD Acceptable Use Policy.

At the conference, a folder is distributed to all the members involved in BEST for use by novice teachers, mentors, and administrators. The intended uses for the conference folder are: educational purposes, professional development, instructional needs, techniques, strategies, behavioral concerns, ideas, celebrations, kudos and questions. This conference folder serves as the tangible link that ties all the members involved in BEST together and provides an organizational tool for storing materials related to the program.

Around every three months, BEST hosts a seminar designed for improving mentoring skills. These are generally held after school and are centered around a topic designed to increase communication between the mentor and the new teacher.

Specific sessions are held for teachers with assignments in programs such as Special Education and Bilingual/English as a Second Language. High school teachers attend specialized training provided by the New Educator Support Team (NEST). All teachers receive basic one- day technology training (First Class, Grade Book, Teacher Work Station, Sub-Finder, and TaskStream are all computer-based programs used by the school district).

Teachers are also provided time to work with campus mentors at their home campus to prepare for the first days of school. Follow-up professional development opportunities are held throughout the year for new educators. The effectiveness of the staff

development is monitored and teacher feedback is used to make improvements for the following year.

Beginning Educators Support and Training (BEST) and New Teachers

The other critical component of the BEST program—and the reason for its development—is its support and encouragement of new teachers. Similarly to the Mentor Institute, the New Teacher Institute (NTI) exists to provide a framework of help and resources for new teachers who are participating in the BEST program.

Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) Induction Program in New Oaks Independent School District (NOISD)

New Oaks Independent School District (NOISD) was one of the 50 school districts awarded monies for the implementation or the continuation of district induction and mentoring programs. The required 20% matching funds to complete the monies for the ongoing support of the BEST program that was initiated in 1999 under the Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TexBESS) was provided through Title I monies.

The BEST program in New Oaks ISD has two major components. The district lists the overall goals of the BEST program, then breaks down the program for stakeholders to understand all the aspects involved. The entire program consists of a New Teacher Institute component and a Mentor Institute Program component, as described in Chapter II.

The district states that the goal of the BEST Induction program is to create a district induction program that will provide professional growth and support for beginning educators and the district's mentors who lead them.

New Oaks ISD lists the following objectives for the BEST program on the school district website:

1. To increase teacher retention generally in the teaching profession, but especially in New Oaks ISD.
2. To minimize the level of stress in the first year of teaching by providing a support group within New Oaks ISD that will ensure a positive, successful experience.
3. To help new teachers achieve success for all students, improve the quality of instruction and classroom management, improve student-teacher relationships, and encourage consistency across the district for curriculum and instruction.
4. Through continuous training, establish a cadre of highly trained mentors who have the ability to address the levels of concern and developmental needs of new teachers.

New Teacher Institute Component of the BEST Program in New Oaks ISD

New Teacher Institute is held over a five-day period one week prior to the start of the school year. It is available for all teachers new to the New Oaks Independent School District. A cadre of mentors presents information on content specific materials,

curriculum guidelines, and lesson planning. The following flow chart in Figure 1 graphically represents the process and timeline:

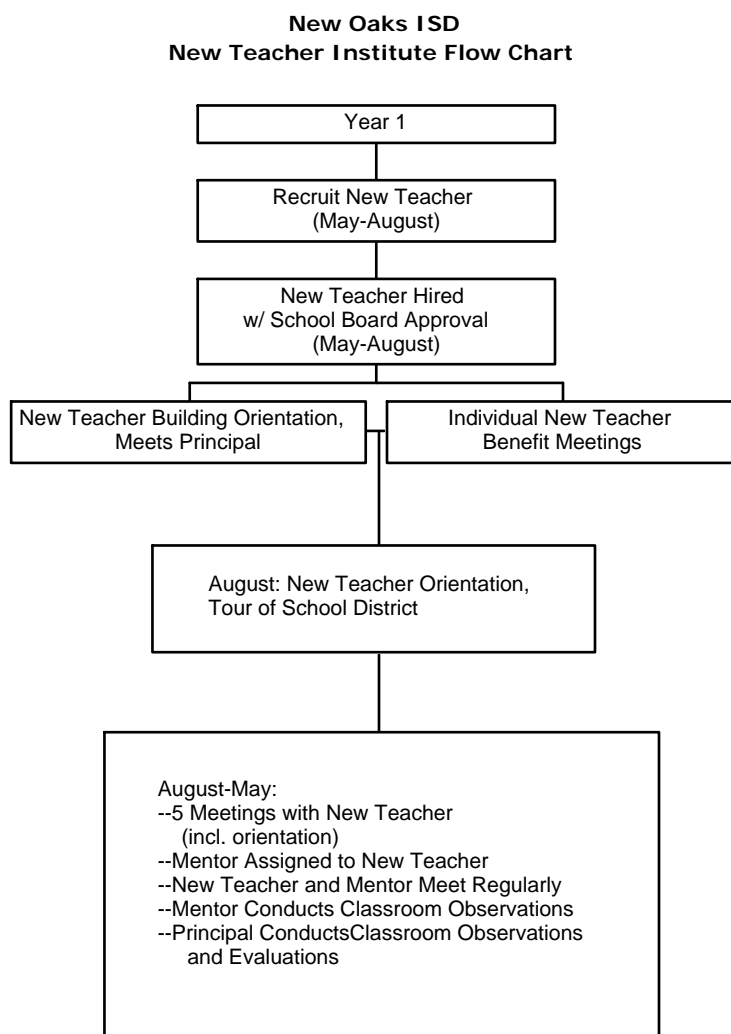


Figure 1: Flow chart for New Oaks ISD NTI process

The goals for New Oaks ISD's BEST program with regard to its New Teacher Institute are printed in a booklet that each new teacher receives. The booklet also

contains information about the BEST program, teacher mentoring in general, and the year's schedule and details of activities of the New Teacher Institute. The goals for the New Teacher Institute as stated in the booklet are shown in Appendix I.

All new teachers are given a handbook designed by New Oaks ISD, listing expectations and recommendations for first- and second-year teachers. There is a separate handbook for elementary and secondary teachers, since the specifications differ depending upon licensure content area(s).

The New Teacher Induction Seminars are designed to provide helpful guidance for the beginning teachers, according to all three participants. The mission of the school district and the program is clearly outlined. During the first year of teaching, attendance at the five Induction Seminars was mandatory.

At the close of each mandatory session, the new teachers were given an "exit slip" to fill out. This half-sheet of paper had three parts: 1) Two things I learned tonight; 2) Two suggestions that I have for the future; and 3) A compliment I want to give. The feedback from these forms was provided to the BEST director to structure future sessions and to plan for the next year's programs.

The BEST program also hosts Mentor Training simultaneously with the Induction Seminars. The titles for the mentor teacher seminars, entitled "Mentoring Matters" were:

1. The Coaching Cycle (October)
2. The Coaching Plan (November)
3. Assessment to Instruction (January)

The Mentor Institute Component

The Mentor Institute (MI) is held one week prior to the first day of the school year. The sessions include an introduction of the mentoring team, the district focus, the campus focus, expectations of New Teacher Institute (NTI), and planning for the first weeks of school.

At the local level, the goal of New Oaks ISD's Induction Program is to prepare the teachers for the second year of teaching. The policy at New Oaks ISD requires all new teachers (first-year) to participate in the induction seminars. In addition, all new teachers are assigned a mentor at the beginning of the school year, preferably one who is teaching the same grade level. The mentoring relationship formally continues through the end of the new teacher's second year, although they do not meet together as often during the second year.

The Evaluation Components

The PDAS domains listed in Chapter III are the basis for the new teacher evaluations from their mentor teachers. The principals also use these domains, but the mentor teacher may only use portions of the domain to focus on during one of his or her two observations. The mentor teacher's presence while the new teacher is presenting a lesson is called an "observation," while the building principal's presence is termed an "evaluation."

For the first observation and evaluation, which is due by December during the first year of teaching, only certain domains are evaluated. The final evaluation and

observation is due in the spring and it is the complete evaluation and observation. The design of the process dictates that the mentor comes in and observes the new teacher, providing a “practice round” for the principal’s evaluation. The BEST program calls this a “Comprehensive Classroom Observation.” The new teacher and mentor meet before the observation date. The mentor teachers, according to the protocols dictated by their training, use a Pre-Conference Protocol sheet (see Appendix J) and go over the ground rules of what will happen during the observation. After each mentor observation, the mentor and the new teacher confer about the lesson and talk about how things are going in general. The mentor teacher uses a Post-Conference Protocol (Appendix K) to guide the discussion and the new teacher brings a completed Self-Analysis Checklist (Appendix L).

During the first year of teaching, the new teacher is evaluated by the building principal one to two times per semester. The school district built its evaluation policy of new teachers following the guidelines of the Professional Development Appraisal System (PDAS).

The PDAS is a teacher evaluation system created by the Texas Education Agency following the passage of Senate Bill 1 in 1995. The goal of the PDAS is to advance the level of the professional practice of teaching in Texas. The evaluation criteria incorporate the learner-centered proficiencies and promote continuous professional development. All public school teachers in Texas, including fine arts teachers, are appraised once a year.

Data for appraisal of each domain (see Appendix M: Eight Domains of the PDAS) are gathered from observations, Teacher Self-Report Forms, and other documented sources. The data describe how teachers led to increased student achievement, made the whole school safe and orderly, and created a stimulating learning environment for all students.

A Snapshot of the Participants

The most striking impression one receives in interviews with new teachers is the wide variety of individual circumstances, ages, backgrounds, and paths through which they came to teaching. In Texas, the opportunity to enter teaching via alternative certification programs as well as through traditional college and university-based programs has broadened the diversity of new teachers' preparation experiences. As a result, there is considerable variety in the extent to which they have had exposure to classroom practice in some form or other prior to their first year as professional teachers. The diversity among new teachers will be demonstrated in a following section by describing a few of the individual teachers the researcher interviewed.

The participants selected for the study were three female, second-year elementary teachers. Due to the nature of the study, anonymity was respected. Care was taken in assigning pseudonyms to all participants, all schools and the school district in order to uphold the confidentiality established prior to any data collection. An initial contact was made with the director of the BEST program. Upon receiving information about how to go about gaining permission to conduct research in the district, and upon obtaining this permission, I was then able to ask the BEST director for some participant

recommendations. Pursuant to this request, she gave me the names of ten different second-year teachers from a variety of elementary schools within the district. I had asked for more potential participants than I needed for the study so that I could further protect the anonymity of the participants by not informing the director as to which three participants I actually used in the study. Three teachers were chosen from three different elementary schools. All three teachers were female. Each participant will be further introduced in order to provide background knowledge and information as a foundational piece for this study. In the brief descriptions that follow, names of the respondents have been changed to preserve anonymity.

Gretchen

Gretchen grew up in central Texas and attended a high school she described as “similar to the high school in this study’s district,” a 5A high school. After high school, she attended an institution of higher education in Texas, located about two hours’ drive from her home town. Gretchen attended a large institution with approximately 40,000 students. Gretchen is a K–6 certified elementary teacher with no special endorsements. When asked what brought her to teaching, she replied:

I always knew that I would end up being a teacher. My mother tells me that I used to teach to all my stuffed animals and dolls when I was just a little girl. I began helping with things like Vacation Bible School and Summer Camps and I remember my roles as a teacher more than I remember being in VBS or a camper. My mother is a nurse, and my father worked in the oilfield, so I didn’t

have teachers in the family, but I still always knew that this is what I wanted to do with my life.

During her higher education, Gretchen had a least four different classroom experiences, but none of them were in lower socioeconomic status (SES) areas nor did she receive any special education experience, she noted. This subsequently proved to be a significant point, since Gretchen is teaching at a lower SES campus and had two mainstreamed special education students in her classroom. Gretchen stated that her main goal in teaching was “to make a difference in a child’s life”.

Kim

Kim had a much different path into teaching than Gretchen did. She graduated from high school and joined the work force at age 18. She had a variety of jobs, but most enjoyed working as an instructional aide in an elementary school. Spanish is her first language, and the school she worked at encouraged her to go to college to earn her degree so she could become a teacher of record. No one in her family had ever gone to college, and Kim had never thought of herself as being college material, she said, so she did not pursue these comments for many years. The turning point in Kim’s career came when a new principal noticed her effectiveness with ESL students and told her that she would help Kim try to get some financial aid if she wanted to get her teaching certificate. The principal added that she could continue to keep her job as an aide while she was pursuing her degree. So, at age 30, Kim enrolled in school and five years later she graduated from college. She moved to New Oaks ISD to begin her first year as a dual-language-certified teacher. Kim’s narrative of her journey to become a teacher was

reflected in many of her answers to the questions in the interview, and this was notable mostly because she took the non-traditional path to becoming a teacher. When asked if it was “all worth it,” Kim replied:

Absolutely. I had been working around kids for so long that I didn’t realize that all that was training for being a teacher. You know, at the time, it was just my job. When I started thinking about myself as being the teacher, then I would find myself being dissatisfied at just being the helper, because I wasn’t making the decisions in the classroom. That’s what pushed me into college: the thought of having my own classroom [where] I could teach the students the way I knew they would learn best.

Kim’s primary goal in wanting to teach is “to have students make a connection between learning and understanding how learning affects their lives.”

Shannon

Shannon received her education at a small university that she chose based on its religious affiliation. She had two semesters of observing in a classroom, but other than her student teaching, she received little classroom time to prepare her for teaching. She comments on this as being a negative aspect, because she didn’t believe she was adequately prepared for the classroom during her student teaching. Her licensure area is in elementary education, K–6. What was unique about the way Shannon was introduced to teaching in New Oaks ISD is that she spent the first three weeks of her first year assigned to a 5th grade classroom. She knew that there was a possibility that she would be moved to a 1st grade classroom, and this did occur, although it took three weeks for

the move to be completed. “Since I knew I would most likely end up in a first grade classroom, I had no idea what to do with the 5th graders for those three weeks,” Shannon commented. “We just kind of looked at each other a lot. They were sweet kids, so I guess I got lucky, but I was so relieved to have a 1st grade class.... You may have noticed that I am not a very big person,” Shannon added with a laugh, “so I feel better where the students are still shorter than I am!” When asked what brought her to teaching in the first place, Shannon replied:

I had some really good teachers, and when I was a junior in high school, I took an aptitude test that scored [highly] in the area of becoming a teacher. That was when you don’t know what you are going to do with your life, so I guess having something, even a test, tell me that I would be a good teacher, put the seed in my brain. When I went to college and had to bubble in what I wanted to study, I just put “education” and sure enough, I really liked my major.

This chapter has provided a description of the study site’s characteristics with regard to demographics, TEA accountability ratings, and its approach to the BEST teacher induction program. Additionally, it has described the individual campuses where the participants in this study currently teach. Finally, this chapter has provided an introduction to each of the three second-year teachers who participated in this study, with emphasis on how they came to teach and on their motivations and expectations as they began their first year in the classroom.

In the next chapter, I will present the data gathered during the study and the conclusions drawn from interpreting the data.

CHAPTER V

PRESENTING THE FINDINGS AND INTERPRETING THE RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to look at the effects of a new teacher induction program on teacher's perceptions of themselves and their teaching. My research was set up to answer the question: What are the perceptions of second-year teachers completing the induction program and remaining in the school district beyond the critical first few years? The question and sub-questions that guided my research were semi-structured and open-ended to allow for more in-depth conversations. These became the foundational components for this interpretive qualitative study. The research question was: What are the second-year teachers' perceptions of the formal induction program? The sub-questions were:

1. Do the second-year teachers' perceptions of the BEST program correlate with their perceived effectiveness as teachers?
2. What are the problems new teachers face?
3. How do second-year teachers perceive the impact administrators have on induction programs and new teachers?
4. What are the induction program components?

Perceptions of second-year teachers and the induction program were explored through the viewpoints of three second-year teachers during the 2008–09 school year.

From the analysis of perceptions, the researcher drew conclusions and implications as to whether the support of the BEST program in New Oaks ISD plays a part in second-year teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness. Throughout the analysis stage, I tried to focus on the practical implications of the data to define and clarify the study's significance. This chapter reports the findings of the researcher engaging in the interpretive act of shaping the data collected. Themes and patterns began to emerge during the data collection and analysis process. Each group of questions and answers were categorized and color-coded to better organize data relevant to the study.

Questionnaires

As discussed in the review of the methodology for this study, a questionnaire (see Appendix B) was e-mailed to the three participants. Their responses to these questions provided the researcher with information on their perceptions of the school district, their campuses, and their involvement in the BEST program as first-year teachers. Subsequently, interviews were scheduled with each participant, and open-ended interview questions were designed based on the background data the participants provided in the questionnaires.

Interviews with the Participants

Interviews with all participants were conducted with the goal of answering the overarching research question: What are the perceptions of second-year teachers

completing the induction program? Each interview was used to refine and shape subsequent interviews. The individual interviews were held in the participants' classrooms and lasted 45–60 minutes.

The initial interview for this study was designed to get to know the participants and their backgrounds leading to their present positions at New Oaks ISD. The subsequent interview questions were developed based upon views expressed previously by participants and to address the research study's questions. All interviews were recorded, and the researcher took field notes that were transcribed in a timely fashion and given to the participants for member checking. Responses were charted based upon emerging themes and patterns and were then color-coded. As the coding was done, themes and patterns began to emerge that could be studied in the analysis phase.

I found myself immersed in the conversations and able to visualize the actual events narrated by the participants. All participants answered all questions and responded in a forthright manner to all communication and verifications. Table 4 lists the dates of the interviews with the participants.

Table 4: Interview Timetable and Topics

Interview	Date	Topics
#1	3/09	“Getting To Know You” and “New Teacher Perceptions”
#2	5/09	“Second-Year Teacher Perceptions ”

I began initial conversations with the participants by learning about their backgrounds and experiences and by discussing the current induction program for first-year teachers. We reviewed together the goals of New Oaks ISD’s New Teacher Institute so I could begin to address the research sub-question of relating the experiences in the induction program to her perceived teacher effectiveness. At various times, participants expressed the belief there is definitely room for the program to expand and to better meet the needs of new teachers. Gretchen, in particular, seemed pleased that this study would potentially provide an avenue by which to do this. In talking with the participants, I discovered that state induction program mandatory attendance guidelines only apply for first-year teachers, and although second-year teachers are still formally in the induction phase, they are not required to attend BEST programs that occur throughout the year.

In my conversations with them, both Kim and Shannon mentioned the fact that they realized their mentor was training to be a mentor while they were mentoring them, and they felt good about their mentor teacher having tools and training that were ultimately designed to help them in their first years of teaching. It is important to note that the new teachers had a positive view of the mentor teacher training and did not

expect their mentors to know how to best mentor them without receiving some guidance.

I learned that the New Oaks ISD school board as well as the central administration was actively involved in endorsing the existing BEST program, which started in 2001. The agenda of the program, however, is left to the discretion of the BEST director.

The following sections in this chapter will present perceptions, viewpoints, and perspectives related to teaching in New Oaks ISD. The themes that emerged in the analysis of data obtained from the interviews, questionnaires, and journal entries related to issues of the induction process, nurturing of and for new teachers, “reality shock” and challenges faced by new teachers, and the overall perceptions associated with the first and second years of teaching.

All the participant teachers were very open about their personal viewpoints during their interviews about the current program. Both Gretchen and Shannon, for example, raised a concern that there was a need for further communication with the school district’s central office during year two of the induction process.

When each participant was asked what the mandatory five meetings during their first year were about, none of them could really remember any specifics, indicating that they were not necessarily very helpful or at least had little lasting benefit. In fact, of the three teachers, not one of them could recall a single session title or topic. They indicated that they were exhausted at all the meetings, confessed to not wanting to be there, and

even mentioned that they sometimes brought grading to do during the conferences. Their complaints about the meetings were as follows:

Gretchen: “I had just heard all that stuff in college, and it wasn’t anything that I didn’t know: topics like classroom management and so on. What I needed was to be hearing from teachers and getting a chance to ask questions, not sitting in a lecture.”

Kim: “Now I remember that one of the seminars was about lesson planning. I remember thinking that I would rather be writing my lesson plans right now than sitting in a conference about one.”

Shannon: “The speakers weren’t teachers, that was the first problem. I don’t really care, honestly, about the structure of central office or the district, I just wanted some help to get me through the week!”

In conjunction with the questions about their perceptions of the first-year mandatory seminars in the induction program, when asked to rate the seminars on a scale of 1–10 with 10 being the highest, all three respondents gave the rating of 3. The teachers indicated that on the “exit slip” they always wrote that they would like more practical information and for mentor teachers to come and talk to them at the seminars, but they never received any feedback from those comments. They elaborated on their recommendations for future induction program planning, which will be discussed in Chapter V.

Near the end of my data collection process, I asked the second-year teachers about how the induction program helped them develop as teachers during year one.

Their responses varied:

Gretchen: “We got a binder full of information and I had to go to meetings I didn’t want to go to; that’s the negative stuff. The positive stuff was that this program gave me my mentor, and the classroom observations that [the mentor and Gretchen] talked about were very, very helpful to me. I was probably the most nervous about another teacher coming in to watch me as I was starting my whole teaching career, but it was fine. If that is all I got from the BEST program, it would be worth it to me.”

Kim: “My mentor was helpful to me, so that came from the program, but other than that, I can’t really say the program helped me at all.”

Shannon: “BEST was a good review of being a professional teacher and other ‘basic’ teacher information. It was always very organized and the director is very nice.”

I was curious to discover more of the background of these responses, so I pursued their answers by asking what each of them would consider to be an “ideal” induction program. Gretchen said:

I think an ideal induction program would aim to inform new teachers about the specific building they are working in, rather than overall district information. It would let new teachers have a place to vent and express frustration and ask questions and get answers.

Kim's response to the same question was:

The problem I have with BEST is that it seems like more work for me to do, rather than helping me with my work. An ideal program would lighten my load by giving me practical applications and the option of attending seminars if they were in an area I felt I needed some extra information in.

Shannon defined an ideal induction program as:

[making] sure that every new teacher had a mentor in her same building and on his or her grade level so they could actually build a relationship. If you don't ever see a mentor, what good are they?"

(Shannon's mentor was at the same school, but on a campus with multiple buildings and her mentor teacher's classroom was in the building farthest from Shannon. As a result of these locations, their paths rarely crossed in the course of a school day).

With regard to the evaluation component of the BEST program, all three teachers in the study reported that having the "practice" lesson with a mentor was extremely helpful to them. The form that the mentor teachers uses, the "Comprehensive Classroom Observation Form: New Oaks ISD Mentoring Program" (see Appendix O) provides room for feedback from the mentor as well as addressing the Core Standards for Instruction (Appendix N).

In addition to the concrete evaluation this provided for the new teachers, they were happy about the level of familiarity with their evaluation process they had as a result of the mentor/observation-principal/evaluation protocol.

Gretchen: “I was so nervous when my mentor teacher came to observe me, but it was great because then when I had my principal evaluation, I had already been there before.”

Kim: “I probably wasn’t supposed to do this, but I decided to teach the same lesson both at my mentor and my principal evaluation. When I met with my mentor and told her that was my plan, she asked me if I thought about what I would do if one of the kids said, first thing, ‘we already did this!’ I hadn’t thought about that, so I am glad I was honest with her. I did a different lesson, and it went great.”

Shannon: “Having the comprehensive classroom observation with a mentor was the best part of the BEST program, no pun intended. The fact that we met before and after, and that I was required to analyze myself, was incredibly helpful.”

Each teacher communicated an appreciation of the value of the evaluation process and the way it was implemented. They viewed it as something to make them stronger and better teachers and felt that the evaluation tools were techniques for nurturing, too.

In the next section, the focus is on looking at who provides the guidance and nurturing that new teachers need, the value of nurturing and guidance, and the resources

provided within and outside the school district, as these qualities bear upon the teacher induction program.

In talking with the second-year teachers in this study, I discovered that there are a variety of individuals they may rely on for needed words of advice or encouragement. In this section, I will present the second-year teacher's perspectives on guidance and identifying the individuals who can be significant to new teachers adapting to the challenges of being career educators.

Throughout the interviews, all three teachers indicated that they relied on their mentors, colleagues, principals, or others for advice and even reassurance during their first two years of teaching. In addition, their journal entries often dealt with topics related to their felt needs for support as new teachers.

Emerging Themes

Even though their preparatory experiences varied widely, both the interviews and the journal entries completed by each of the second-year teachers yielded a rather consistent picture of the beginning teacher's experience. Three themes emerged as characteristic of how new teachers and their schools grapple with this critical transitional period into the profession.

Theme 1: Overwhelmed

"Overwhelming" was by far the most common term used to describe the experience of the first year of teaching. New teachers find themselves inundated with

unfamiliar responsibilities and overwhelmed by their students, by paperwork, by lesson planning, by the flood of information they suddenly receive about detailed school district and campus procedures, and occasionally by the load of professional development training they are required to take. As one teacher claimed, “Survival is my objective the first year.” Another explained, “Every day is a new day and you don’t know what is ahead of you.”

Shannon journaled that her initial reaction to teaching was, “Oh my gosh, I can’t possibly do this for the rest of my life! You feel like you are drowning.” Mentors and other teachers in Shannon’s school were seeking ways to ease her burden of being overwhelmed during the first few weeks of school. For example, Shannon’s mentor helped her organize the layout of her classroom to be a more efficient workspace. Kim journaled that she received assistance with lesson planning from both her mentor, who teaches language arts at a different grade level, and the school’s instructional specialist, who was a veteran English teacher before she left classroom teaching. Most importantly, colleagues urged both Shannon and Kim to “take at least one day during the weekend in which you do *nothing* related to school.”

Shannon related a story during an interview about laying her head down on her desk at the end of the day early in the school year and falling asleep. She literally slept through a faculty meeting and was so embarrassed to tell the principal what had happened. Shannon called her mentor teacher that night and asked for advice on how to handle the situation and the mentor teacher made her feel much better about the mistake, but reinforced that she shouldn’t do that again. Shannon explained:

I knew I had messed up, but I really was completely exhausted from teaching and as it turned out, I was actually coming down with the flu. My mentor teacher said I should just apologize for missing the meeting, assure the principal it wouldn't happen again, and ask what I needed to do or know that was discussed at the meeting. It was fine, and the principal actually laughed, thinking about my being so exhausted at the end of the day. The principal gave me a hug, and the crisis was averted. I had been considering writing a serious letter to the principal, but my mentor's advice to just tell the principal what happened up front turned out to be the best thing to do. This is kind of a story that explains how helpful it was to have someone who knows the principal or other teachers better than you do that you can run ideas through first. My mentor had a ten-year relationship with the principal and knew what the reaction would be. I am new around, and I was unsure. I'm not proud of that story, but it definitely speaks to the topic of how I sometimes felt like I had just had about all I could take some days!

Theme 2: First Things First

The needs driving these new teachers' stated concerns and the bulk of mentoring assistance they received early in the year clustered in two particular areas: classroom management and school procedures. All three second-year teachers interviewed in this study identified classroom management, including both organization and student discipline, as the most common area of concern. The data collected for this study

mentioned classroom management 28 times during the course of the interviews, journal responses, and initial questionnaires.

In talking about her struggles with managing a class full of first-graders, Gretchen said, “When I first started, it was like, ‘oh my goodness, how am I going to teach these kids if I can’t get them to sit down and be quiet?’” Gretchen journaled about the ways in which her co-teachers helped her develop a discipline plan, and she stated that this was of tremendous benefit in helping her gain the control in her classroom that she needed to establish an effective instructional environment. Gretchen detailed a classroom discipline plan that involved her passing out tickets as a reward for good behavior throughout the school day. Copying the plan that had been successful for Gretchen’s mentor teacher, and even using the same tickets, poster for rewards and patterns for the whole system, Gretchen put this to work in her classroom. She stated:

It took about three week before the kids got the hang of realizing that the tickets were coming to them for good behavior, and [the tickets] were going to pay off for them, and that they weren’t getting the tickets if they continued to be unruly in the classroom. My mentor teacher told me that consistency on my part was going to make or break whether or not this discipline plan worked, so I really made kicking off this new plan a priority. I had tickets on my person at all times. In every pocket, at my desk, I would literally find tickets in my car and my purse, in the laundry—it was like ticket city for awhile. I was actually blown away with the success of doing this. I think that in theory, I was opposed to thinking that I had to give students something for doing what they should be

doing in the first place, you know, on their own. But judging from the lack of discipline that there was in my classroom, I clearly had to get control of my students before I could teach them very effectively. In the end, I became a big proponent of the whole ticket/reward system. I don't hand out nearly the amount of tickets that I used to, but I also don't always need to encourage good behavior that way—we have come a long way from where we started. I heard that the kindergarten class is going to do a circus theme for their program, and I thought about the days before the ticket plan in my classroom where I felt like I was in a circus all day long. It made me glad that I have a bit more classroom management skill in my possession now.

Shannon discussed her need to figure out how to prepare her lessons for each day along with putting grades in the computer and keeping track of everything else. This is what was difficult for Shannon, as the subject of planning for lessons came up repeatedly both in her interviews and in her journal entries. The data collected from this interview with Shannon on this topic was easy to place in the emerging theme of “first things first” as she spoke directly to the concept of getting a firm grasp of what needed to be done first in the classroom. She said:

It seemed to me that all the curriculum was moving entirely too fast. I couldn't seem to process moving through so much content, so I naturally thought that my students wouldn't be able to get everything also ... My mentor teacher [during my first year] did her observation of a lesson with me after I had moved to the first grade from the fifth grade temporary placement and afterwards, during

our post conference, something happened to me that pretty much changed everything that I do now. What happened is that my mentor teacher was able to show me that what I was doing, in that particular lesson, was trying to do too much during too short of a time period. I made the jump that this was true for all my efforts in the classroom and this was what was causing me to feel so frantic about lesson planning. For each lesson, I was going through the lesson cycle and adding centers, and extra follow-up activities and so on. My mentor teacher did a great job of letting me know that she wasn't suggesting that I necessarily don't do those things, but that I perhaps needed to prioritize what was critical to teaching my content in a certain area. We spent about two hours after my lesson observation and went over every aspect of my lesson. For example, I was teaching initial consonant sounds in my lesson, which was really more of a review lesson. I went through each consonant in the whole alphabet, whereas I could have just selected a few (that was my mentor's suggestion). This was similar to the fact that I had a matching picture for each letter that I had hand-made for the lesson. My mentor teacher showed me a website that had tons of resources that I could have used. It wasn't like I didn't know I couldn't get these things from somewhere else, but it was like, suddenly I had permission to not go so overboard with every lesson. I don't mean to sound like my mentor teacher was telling me to not work so hard, it was just she helped me streamline and be more efficient. Turns out, the website that I use now with the smart board for initial sounds is way better than anything I could have come up with. I am

getting the hang of it. That day helped me so much, I think I have relaxed a little more since then. I can say I am not nearly as stressed out as I used to be when I think about planning my lessons.

Likewise, Kim's journal responses and interviews revealed more supportive data in this particular theme. Kim, being a bilingual teacher, found herself being called out of the classroom very often to speak with parents at the office or with other teachers. So much so, that it was beginning to interfere with her regular routine in the classroom. She states:

Spanish is my first language, and everyone on my hallway knows that. Not all the teacher speak Spanish and we have a large population of students with Spanish speaking parents who speak very little English. I was often asked to come and, well just translate, for one reason or another. I kind of just considered this part of my job and that I was happy to be able to help. One day my mentor had come by to schedule my pre-observation conference with me during my first year. In the ten minutes she was in my room visiting with me during our conference period, two different requests had been made for me to come and speak Spanish to someone somewhere. My mentor asked me if that happened a lot, and when I told her it did, she said "When do you get your work done if you are doing all this for everyone else?" I told her that I take my work home at night and that I come to school at least one hour before the first bell. I was so surprised at her reaction because I was expecting her to praise me and tell me that was so great that I was helping out so much, but she actually kind of

scolded me! She said “Kim, it seems to me that there are other Spanish speaking folks on this campus, and you need to have your conference period to yourself. This is ridiculous!” I couldn’t have been more shocked! But you know, she was right. I was running around the school talking to people at the front desk, on the phone, in other teacher’s parent conferences, that I wasn’t able to focus on my own classroom the way I should have been able to. After I got the courage to tell people every once in awhile that I would love to help out but that I was too busy with my class, no one seemed angry with me. The principal didn’t threaten to fire me or anything, I am not sure what I thought would happen, but I started to get it that it was OK for me to focus on my own students. I think I would still be interpreting for everyone if my mentor teacher hadn’t come by that day and set me straight about that. I will never forget that!

Theme 3: A Mentoring Culture

In schools exhibiting a fertile climate of professional development, new teachers appear to gain support from teaching colleagues in addition to (or sometimes even instead of) a single, formally assigned mentor (Moore, 2007). In such situations, much additional informal mentoring and collaboration takes place among instructional-level team members and teachers who work in the same academic area. New teachers may also be mentored by different teachers, according to their particular domains of practice. For example, one colleague may have special skills in classroom management, while another is very helpful with lesson planning. The theme emerging from eight references in the journal responses and six direct references in the first and second interviews

between all three participants clearly defined the notion of a *mentoring culture* being created at a school. This phenomenon, according to the perceptions of the second-year teachers, is a direct result of their participation in the BEST program. All three teachers in the study commented on how their mentor teacher—and the fact that everyone knew that there was a mentoring program going on—created a heightened awareness of mentoring in general. Kim, in her second interview, commented on the fact that the principal at her school always recognized the mentor teachers on campus. The principal would ask, during faculty meetings, about how the new teachers and their mentors were doing. “Just addressing the BEST program parts, specifically, we new teachers and the mentors that work with us, just served as a reminder to everyone that, ‘hey, there are new kids on the block around here—what am I doing to help out?’ It was like a consistent theme throughout the year to encourage each other and share our talents and time with each other. I think it created a mentoring atmosphere that everyone, new teachers and the teachers that have been around longer, really gained something from as well,” Kim explained.

Similarly, Shannon added to this data in one of her journal responses that stated, “Today I am happy about the fact that the teachers in my grade level and always looking for ways to help me out. It makes me happy to know that they are looking out for me and that they want me to have a successful year.”

Gretchen commented in her second interview a consistent sentiment:

Even when I didn’t see my officially assigned mentor teacher for awhile, I didn’t feel like I didn’t have anyone that I could ask for advice if I needed to, or

that I could talk to about something going on in the classroom. Just the fact that they knew that I had a mentor, I was a new teacher, and that everyone should be about making things as smooth sailing as can be for the newer teachers, provided this environment that I felt like was supportive. It's almost like there was this rule that you just help out the new kids—that's just what you do. I felt that. I can't tell you one hundred percent that it was because of the BEST program, but I'm sure having a formal induction program in place definitely helped to make this whole "feeling thing" happen. I wish I could explain this better for you, do you get what I am saying? The feeling I had that the people I was working with wanted to help me?

Summary: Second-Year Teachers Reflect on the BEST Program

As the data-gathering phase of my research drew to a close, I asked the three second-year teachers to reflect on what they felt they had learned through their induction process at New Oaks ISD during the second interview. I specifically requested that they consider how their experiences with the program did or did not contribute to their effectiveness as teachers.

Kim responded, "My ability to take on many different roles is drastically better. I have learned, through lots of different avenues [BEST being one of them], that teaching isn't just being a teacher. I am a counselor, a parent, a nurse, a pack-mule, and a janitor. I feel like my ability to multitask is better, and that makes me more effective as a teacher."

I found Shannon's response to the BEST program's impact on her effectiveness as a teacher to be particularly interesting. "I think that I thought I was a good teacher, but when I had my mentor teacher and my principal evaluating me and they told me I was a good teacher, it really affirmed me. My confidence level went up!"

Similarly, Gretchen attributes improvement in her teaching effectiveness to the BEST program process because she feels like she isn't alone. "I think my biggest feeling in terms of how BEST has increased my teacher effectiveness is that I know I am part of a team. I don't have much interaction with the central office, but I know they are there to support me. Here at my campus there is my principal, the counselor, my co-teachers; we are all in this together and that makes me feel like I can tackle any problem that may arise in the classroom. The BEST director emphasized at all times that we had support. Somewhere along the way, I guess that sunk in."

Answering the Research Question

The research question was: What are the second-year teachers' perceptions of the BEST program? All three teachers in the study expressed positive experiences with the BEST induction program as a whole. None of them considered the New Teacher Institute seminars were helpful in any meaningful way. As they spoke about their experiences in the seminars, their impressions did not appear to match up with the school district's written goals for this part of the induction program. In addition, the second-year teachers were not required to attend the New Teacher Institute seminars (unlike first-year teachers), and none of the participants in this study chose to attend the

seminars during their second year of teaching. The fact that none of the second-year teachers in this study chose to attend the BEST programs that were offered during their second year directly affects the comments they made during interviews wherein they complained about not having any formal training during their second year of teaching. There was in fact training in place held by the BEST program, the teachers just did not participate. This distinction more accurately explains the lack of on-going formal training. However, the implication of the BEST program here is that the training seminars were not deemed worthy of attendance by the second-year teachers. This fact could further suggest a discontinuity between the school district's written goals for the New Teacher Institute seminars and how they are actually perceived and experienced by first-year teachers.

On the other hand, all three participants in this study expressed appreciation for the mentoring aspects and components of the BEST induction program. Both the formal, assigned mentoring relationships and the informal mentoring relationships (support and guidance) that were built between other teachers the participants acquired on their own (as a result of the mentoring culture the second-year teacher's perceived to be fostered by the BEST program) proved to be indispensable to improving the participants' perceptions of their effectiveness as teachers, according to their comments on the questionnaires, in the interviews, and in their journal stem responses. Examples of this in addition to those provided earlier in Chapter IV include a comment from Kim made during her first interview:

My mentor became something like a security blanket for me. Maybe not something that I dragged around all of the time, but she was someone that I felt better knowing that I could get to her if I needed her. That feeling is really priceless when you are trying to figure out all of the ins and outs of what it means to be a teacher. It takes the sting out, definitely.

Gretchen reiterated this point when she wrote in a journal response:

The fact that I know I can call up [the BEST program director], my mentor or any number of other people on campus here and talk to them about any situation I may have come up; that feeling of being on a team—that is what I think the whole idea of mentoring does best.

Both these examples illustrate how the mentoring culture was a phenomenon that the second-year teachers in this study perceived to be a result of the BEST program, but one that could arguably not be a result of their assigned mentoring relationship. Because the study participants knew that the study being conducted was about their experiences with the induction program in which mentoring was a component, the terms “mentor” and “mentoring” were perhaps used with more frequency; the terms “support” and “guidance” would perhaps have more accurately described the experiences they had.

First Sub-question

The first sub-question was: Do the second-year teachers’ perceptions of the BEST program correlate with their perceived effectiveness as teachers? As indicated in the section above, when asked to reflect on how their experiences in the BEST induction program did or did not contribute to their effectiveness as teachers, all three participants

indicated strongly that the BEST program made a significant contribution in this regard.

Kim may have stated this the most clearly in an interview response when she said:

I feel twice as confident in my teaching ability at I did my first year of teaching. I received good reviews from my mentor teacher when she observed me and also from my formal evaluations done by the principal. That reinforcement of my ability shot my confidence level way up. I hope that I continually grow as a teacher, and although I don't want to put all my confidence on my evaluations or anything like that, I feel like the positive reinforcement really does make me feel better about my teaching, and that makes me a better teacher.

Shannon expressed a similar thought when she wrote in a journal response:

I am a better teacher now. Because of experience, because of the training I have received, because of my mentor teacher working with me [especially my first year] and because of being on a grade level that supports me. All of it has helped me. That is without question.

Gretchen doesn't directly attribute the BEST program, but she feels more effective as a teacher as indicated by a journal response stating, "I don't think it was because of the BEST program that I am a more confident teacher; that would have happened anyway, but it certainly didn't hurt anything."

Second Sub-question

The second sub-question was: What are the problems new teachers face? By means of the journal prompts, the three participants in this study consistently cited the

themes of feeling overwhelmed, of needing to learn how to put first things first, and of the importance of a mentoring culture to helping new teachers find solutions to these problems. They also consistently referenced the need of new teachers to have support and assistance from co-teachers and others with regard to developing successful strategies for discipline and classroom management. The idea of “support and assistance from co-teachers and others” is what the second-year teachers categorically defined as the informal mentoring that is referred to several times throughout this study. Kim, Shannon, and Gretchen all expressed opinions that the problems they had, characterized in this study under the emerging themes of feeling overwhelmed and needing to learn how to put first things first, were addressed and greatly reduced by the mentoring culture that was created for them on their campuses, a culture that they perceive to be directed and initiated by their participation in the BEST program. Gretchen may have said this best when she explained in her second interview, “You don’t feel like you are going to sink when you know that there are lifeboats out there for you to jump into.”

Third Sub-question

The third sub-question was: How do second-year teachers perceive the impact administrators have on induction programs and new teachers? As demonstrated dramatically by the stated experiences of the teachers at both School B and School C, the campus principal can have a significant impact on the success of an induction program, as well as the campus climate in which the program operates. Especially in his or her ability to administer and encourage the pairing of veteran teachers with new teachers and

thus foster the development of a mentoring culture, the principal's support for the induction program and its objectives is crucial.

Fourth Sub-question

The fourth sub-question was: What components of the induction program are recognized by these second-year teachers? All three second-year teachers were able to clearly define the pieces of the BEST program and were familiar with the components that were listed and formally implemented in New Oaks ISD. In other words, the second-year teachers in this study held perceptions of the BEST program's components that matched the stated and formalized components of the program as implemented by the district. The second-year teachers identified the principal components of the BEST induction program as:

1. New Teacher Institute seminars (required only for first-year teachers)
2. Mentoring
 - a. Mentor Institute training for mentor teachers
 - b. Assignment of mentors to new teachers
 - c. Observation of new teacher by mentor teacher (pre- and post-observation interviews)
 - d. Self-evaluation by new teacher, under mentor's guidance

By discovering answers to the research question and sub-questions, this study has produced data that suggests directions for future research and refinement of new teacher induction programs. The next chapter will provide a summary of these suggested topics for research, as well as concluding observations about this study.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSIONS

Analysis of the Results

As evidenced by the three participants' comments on the benefits and disadvantages they perceived in their experiences with the BEST program, the quality and success of a new teacher induction program must be based on the realities of classroom objectives and guided by the goals of improving teaching and learning. The success of new teachers and students depends upon the creation of a system to support and encourage achievement. Ingersoll's (2001) explanation of school characteristics and organizational conditions that impact teacher turnover—lack of administrative support, inadequate salary, student discipline and motivation problems, class size, inadequate planning time, and lack of opportunity for advancement—were not prominent factors on the campuses of the participants in this study, according to their responses. Planning time and student discipline were issues that the respondents mentioned, but only because they felt they had a lack of experience in these areas. The topic of leaving the district due to problems specific to the schools or district never surfaced in any of the interviews, the questionnaire, or the journal entries.

However, analysis of the data suggests that making improvements in new teacher induction practices that will have high perceived value by new teachers may involve a conceptual shift on the part of planners. The stated goal of the induction program at New

Oaks ISD is to help teachers grow professionally and personally. However, the majority of the teachers participating did not see a direct correlation between their survival and success in the first year and the New Teacher Institute induction seminars they attended. Planners involved in creating and implementing effective program components need to understand the needs and concerns of new teachers and structure the program accordingly. The phenomenon of “loose coupling” (Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005; Rowan, 2006) in educational organizations may prove relevant here. This concept suggests that the core of the educational enterprise is located in classrooms that are segregated from each other and insulated, to a large degree, from outside influences. Accordingly, the felt needs expressed by the new teachers centered mostly on day-to-day classroom management and instruction. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the time spent with mentors and co-teachers was perceived as most beneficial in increasing new teachers’ instructional effectiveness. This suggests that careful consideration may need to be given to expanding this component, or integrating it more closely with the New Teacher Institute seminars.

Any induction program needs to be pertinent to new teacher’s needs to contribute to the success of the new teacher. Grissmer, Kirby, Rand & Lilly (1991) contend that an induction program affords a school district the opportunity to proactively and positively affect the initial habits, practice, and development of the new teacher along with providing effective support and professional development. “One size does not fit all” (Breux & Wong, 2003; Stronge, 2002); hence, employing a more individualized induction program could address the needs of new teachers in a more productive

manner. Several researchers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005; National Center for Education Statistics/AFT, 2001) have proposed qualities of an effective induction program based on their findings associated with fundamental induction program components. When comparing my findings related to New Oaks ISD and these researchers' suggestions, I recognized that the induction program at New Oaks ISD parallels similar qualities presented, with some notable exceptions. For example, the literature suggests "reduced teaching loads for new teachers and for mentors" (Shields, 2003) which is not present in the BEST program (refer to Table 5: Comprehensive Induction Programs versus BEST program). New Oaks ISD adopted a model from a school district which appears to have followed the pattern of using a hybrid of ideas in the design and implementation of their induction program.

Another example of something that is lacking in the induction program at New Oaks ISD is that there seemed to be a disconnect from asking for teacher input on ideas and topics that would be helpful for new teachers and what was actually presented. All the study participants noted that they were asked for ideas and suggestions, but they also noted that they never saw a response to those suggestions. The teachers in the study saw this as a limitation of the current program. The incorporation of topics more relevant to new teachers' needs would make the New Teacher Institute seminars more meaningful, in the opinions of those participating in the study. While the current practice of giving "Exit Slips" to the teachers participating in the seminars seems a step in the direction of encouraging new teachers' input, improvement may be needed in increasing the

perceived link between teachers' suggestions and actual changes effected in the seminar component.

Compared to what the literature describes as comprehensive induction programs, the BEST program could not be considered a comprehensive program. The following table itemizes what the literature defines as comprehensive induction programs compared to the BEST program components. In completing this table, rather than only using the perceptions of the components from the second-year teachers, the researcher drew upon the website of the BEST program and all the printed literature available to get an accurate list of BEST program components. In other words, the following table is an accurate comparison of the BEST program versus what the National Public Network defines as components present in a comprehensive induction program. The table graphically shows that the BEST program cannot be defined as a comprehensive induction program as it does not have all of the components that the literature suggests all comprehensive induction programs have in common.

Table 5: Comprehensive Induction Program versus BEST Program

<i>Comprehensive Induction Program</i>	<i>BEST program</i>
Long-term planning for improving teaching and learning, aligned with the instructional philosophy of the school.	Yes. Long term objectives are stated in the BEST program mission statement.
Practices aligned with professional standards as well as state and local student learning standards.	Yes. The BEST program was created using professional standards set forth by the TxBESS literature.
Provides opportunities for inductees to visit demonstration classrooms.	No. This is suggested, but not strategically planned for.
Incorporating a strong sense of institutional commitment with strong administrator support and involvement.	Yes. All campuses in New Oaks ISD require their new teachers to participate in the BEST program and initial administrator training was mandatory.
Participation by all new teachers, whether entering the profession from traditional or alternative pathways.	Yes. All campuses in New Oaks ISD require their new teachers to participate in the BEST program.
Input from beginning and veteran teachers on program design and structure.	No. The model for the BEST program was adopted from a model in place at another school district.
Begin prior to, extend throughout, and continue beyond the new teacher's first year of teaching.	Yes. The BEST program involvement occurs throughout the first two years of teaching in New Oaks ISD. *The second-year teachers in this study did not utilize the opportunities available past their first year, so this could arguably be a "no".
Provides study groups in which new teachers can network and build support, commitment, and leadership in a learning community.	No. No study groups were formed under the BEST program.

Table 5 (cont.)

<i>Comprehensive Induction Program</i>	<i>BEST program</i>
Provides reduced workloads, release time, and placement in classes with less, rather than more, demanding students.	No. Although principals are encouraged to do this, there are no formal requirements to provide these items and services.
Provides quality mentoring, with careful selection, training, and ongoing support for mentors.	Yes. Each new teacher is assigned a mentor that is part of the Mentor Training Institute.
Provides adequate time and resources for implementation of mentoring practices.	No. There is no release time for mentor interaction.
Provides ongoing assessment to determine whether the program is having its desired impact.	No. To date, there has not been a program assessment conducted.

Source: Public Education Network (2004)

It is interesting to note that the participant teachers' opinions on the seminars' value did not correspond to the literature I had read; I wondered why they were not deemed beneficial by the teachers. Though outside the scope of this study, explanations for this discrepancy might be associated with the backgrounds of the second-year teachers and/or the nature of their pre-service training. Since the ratings for the induction program by the teachers were overall adequate, but low in certain key components of the BEST program, there seems to be room for improvement and concern on the part of the second-year teachers in the study that this component is not working to its highest level of potential. Further analysis of the current program is needed to assure its value to all participants of the BEST program. This table lists the rating given by study participants in the areas they perceived to be the key components of the BEST program. The study participants were just orally asked to give a number between one

and ten to rate each component with one being the lowest and ten being the highest. This was not an evaluation of the program that was premeditated and intended to be the final word on every opinion that they had about each component, but rather this data was intended to serve as a pulse check and spontaneous impression after each teacher elaborated on their experiences within the BEST program. Table 6 serves as a means of contextualizing the comments of the participants that would otherwise seem inconsistent or isolated.

Table 6: Second-Year Teachers Ratings of BEST Program Components

<i>Second-year Teacher</i>	<i>New Teacher Institute</i>	<i>Mentoring Experience</i>	<i>BEST program Involvement Overall</i>
Shannon	3	5	7
Kim	3	7	6
Gretchen	3	8	5

Again, it is important to note that each participant did credit the BEST program for fostering the mentoring culture, although when they were interviewed and made comments about mentoring they noted that this was not always in reference to their formally assigned mentor through BEST, but rather through informal mentoring (support and guidance) relationships forged between other teachers and themselves. The *Mentoring Experience* rating listed in the table above indicates that perhaps Kim and Gretchen were including the mentor culture phenomena while Shannon may have been

thinking of her BEST program assigned mentor specifically which she rarely saw.

While this may be conjecture, this is certainly the implication which explains the many positive comments noted in this study spoken by each participant about their mentoring experiences.

My data further suggests that the district may wish to consider developing a needs assessment tool and use it to redefine the purpose of the BEST program, better utilizing input from teachers. The three individuals involved in this study were committed to the induction program, but in analyzing their comments, it became apparent that clarifying the BEST program's aim and purpose could prove very beneficial in making the induction program better meet the needs of the new teachers employed in the school district. This is made clear in the following statement made by Kim during her second interview:

To be honest with you, I really don't know what part of BEST is making the most difference to me and what would have been here at the school whether or not there was a program like BEST. It's hard to say, really. It's just all part of the new teacher experience and I haven't really thought about it in such detail before we started talking about it in your study [referring to researcher]. It just kind of meshes together.

Similarly, Gretchen followed up by saying, "If I had to guess, I would bet that all of us 'newbies' don't like the New Teacher Institute stuff we had to do, but we love the mentoring. That's pretty obvious to me."

As explained in Chapter II (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999), hiring new teachers, retaining them, and dealing with teacher attrition can be expensive for school districts. Many induction programs are shaped and influenced by state policies pertaining to mandates and funding issues. The lack of funding at the state and local levels has placed limitations on the extent of appropriate training for mentors, the provision of extra days for the mentor to observe and collaborate with the protégé, and paying the mentor a stipend for the extra responsibility of supporting a new teacher. Additional funding could aid in the enhancement of the current induction program to improve the perceptions the new teachers have of it and their role as teachers within the district. Although this topic is outside the scope of this study, there is a large amount of research that indicates that comprehensive induction programs actually save school districts money and that the return on the investment is up to \$1.60 for every \$1.00 spent toward new teacher induction programs (Kinne, 2007).

The data in this study indicates that new teacher relationships with administrators, mentors, and colleagues exist at New Oaks ISD and are enhanced through provision of resources and words of encouragement in providing the needed support. However, even though procedures are in place to nurture, guide, and support new teachers at New Oaks ISD, the induction program does not follow all the characteristics proposed by the Alliance for Excellent Education (2004), Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden (2005), or the National Center for Education Statistics/AFT (2001). As shown above in Table 5 (Comprehensive Induction Programs versus BEST Program), although the BEST program contains many characteristics of

comprehensive induction programs, it does not contain all the characteristics. Among the areas in which BEST falls short it, reduced teaching loads and release time to work with mentors would greatly increase the effectiveness of the BEST program in the New Oaks ISD according to the perception of the second-year teachers. Kim and Gretchen specifically noted in journal entries that they wish they had time built into their day on a regular basis for “reflection and self- assessment” as well as time spent with a veteran teacher.

Not only is assistance important in an induction program, but so is assessment of the new teachers performance and progress.(Odell & Huling, 2000). At New Oaks ISD assistance is provided through new teacher induction seminars, mentoring relationships, and ongoing support from colleagues and administrators as well as the BEST program director. Assessment is performed by the building principals at periodic times each semester during the first two years following the PDAS evaluative system. The dimensions identified within this evaluative system (see outline in Chapter III) aim to develop classroom and instructional strategies while molding quality individuals as teachers. This evaluation process—and especially the involvement of mentor teachers in it—helps to provide considerable constructive feedback to the new teacher in promoting and nurturing professional growth. Teacher satisfaction with the support and guidance they have received within the first two years at New Oaks ISD was described in a positive manner by the teacher participants throughout the entire study. Teacher job satisfaction seems to be high, and the teachers perceive their principals as being satisfied with their performance.

Implications

First, it is apparent that mentoring is only one of many factors associated with the retention of beginning teachers. As Ingersoll (2001) has shown, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners must consider the range of conditions that undermine teacher stability.

Second, I suggest that the goal of teacher mentoring should be focused on improving teacher quality and improving student success. Certainly, teacher retention is a higher-profile goal, especially during this time of teacher shortages. A focus on retention alone, however, may compromise quality teaching by retaining teachers who might be more appropriately counseled out of the profession.

Third, mentoring of beginning teachers should be considered as only one piece of a larger focus on teacher development. Thoughtful reflection on practices by mentor and protégé, school and district administrators, and teacher preparation entities, contribute to the development and continuous improvement of all teachers. Harry Wong makes a clear distinction between the mentoring and induction, as illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7: The Difference between Mentoring and Induction

<i>Mentoring</i>	<i>Comprehensive Induction</i>
Focuses on survival	Promotes career learning and and support professional development
Relies on a single mentor	Provides multiple support people or shares a mentor with other teachers and administrative support
Treats mentoring as an isolated event	Induction is comprehensive and is part of a lifelong professional development design
Limited resources spent	Investment in an extensive, comprehensive, and sustained induction program
Reacts to whatever arises	Acculturates a vision and aligns content to academic standards
Short term, perhaps a year	Long term, recurrent, sustained

Source: Wong, H. K., 2004

Recommendations for Future Research

Researchers still lack a clear definition of what new teacher induction means; future research should be done to address this issue. Teacher induction programs may consist of as little as a one-day orientation program or a casual assignment of another teacher to act as a mentor. To simply leave teacher induction to chance is an injustice to both the new teacher and to the students they serve. Induction programs alone are not necessarily improving new teacher retention, but statistics suggest the hypothesis that

induction programs like BEST do help. Clearly defined goals and objectives are needed for effective comprehensive induction programs. Accordingly, there is still much research that needs to be done to answer the question: Should induction programs be mandated for each state at the national level?

To date, the most comprehensive literature providing a general framework for collating the results of individual studies that have sought to determine the strength of various socializing agents to enculture new teachers has been done by Ingersoll and Kralik (2004). However, more work is needed in this area. Current indications, including the findings in this study, are that new teachers become more effective when supported through a comprehensive induction program, rather than simply a mentoring component (Breux & Wong, 2003; Danielson, 1996; Odell & Huling, 2000; Scherer, 1999). In looking at literature from recent dates to as much as twenty years back, various studies and dissertations done on induction programs, retention, teacher identity and socialization, and mentoring, I conclude that more detailed information needs to be compiled and available for school districts to utilize in addressing the current problem of retaining new teachers in their critical first few years of teaching. The challenge for districts and schools is to design a comprehensive induction program that meets the need of their new teachers. Successful programs take time, money, resources, commitment, and patience.

Future research in the areas of retention and designing effective induction programs should also attempt to focus on data taken directly from those individuals who leave the school district or the teaching profession. Effective induction programs can and

should provide a large part of the connection for beginning teachers to a support system to help with the transition from being a student to becoming a professional teacher. It is a formidable challenge to recruit and retain beginning teachers to address both the surge in student enrollment and increasing retirements of veteran teachers over the next few years. The National Center for Education Statistics/AFT (2001) predicts that 2 million new public school teachers will be needed for the 2009–10 school year. Induction programs seem to hold the promise of becoming a good investment that may pay dividends in retaining high-quality new teachers.

Research surrounding the survival and needs of new teachers provides substantial evidence that support systems and induction programs correlate with teacher satisfaction (Fulton, Voon, & Lee, 2005; Ganser, 2001). When they experience job satisfaction, support, and guidance, new teachers tend to stay in the teaching profession, which increases the retention rate and decreases attrition statistics.

This research effort represents a step towards better understanding the mentoring of beginning teachers. While questions remain regarding many aspects of mentoring in Texas and implications for other states, I have identified three issues in particular that merit future research.

First, there is a need to collect information about how time is created for mentoring, whether it be in the form of release time or creative scheduling or both. How much time is needed and how structured should it be? This single element is likely to be a critical determining factor of program success.

Second, research is needed to address how to create an appropriate relationship between mentoring and evaluation. Many programs provide brief mentor training and/or orientation for mentors and mentees and then send them on their way with little or no ongoing support (Lewis, 2002). They are neither well-informed nor well-prepared to conduct appropriate mentor activities, much less participate in evaluation (Wong, 2004). Most pressing is the question of whether mentors of new teachers can or should also be their evaluators. Constructive criticism is certainly appropriate in mentoring, but if mentors are perceived as evaluators, they can be intimidating to vulnerable novice teachers. The dynamics of evaluation and mentoring and ways to avoid negative results should be further studied. Also, there is a need for more sophisticated program evaluation at all levels, including individual campuses, districts, and the state. Since mentoring activities vary so greatly at the individual campus level, efforts should be made to investigate the correlation between mentoring support and retention at this level. When this relationship is better understood, it will become more feasible to weigh the costs and benefits of teacher mentoring.

Finally, a number of questions must be addressed regarding teaching diverse student populations. First, how do districts make decisions regarding beginning teacher assignments, and what are statewide trends regarding placements of new teachers in highly diverse and low-performing schools? Second, what are the key reasons for high attrition in diverse or low-performing schools; and third, how might mentoring support relieve the pressures faced by new teachers in diverse classrooms? Answers to these

questions can help policymakers make policy and resource allocation decisions in order to direct attention to the most critical areas of need.

Conclusions

Mentoring of beginning teachers in Texas is marked by considerable variation in terms of planning and implementation strategies and priorities. The Texas state policy on teacher induction provides minimal direction as to the scope of programming expected of schools and districts, and the policy is not backed by state funding or other support except for the recent time-limited TxBESS program funded by the federal government. It appears that compliance with state policy is not a major driving force for districts to develop mentoring activities for beginning teachers. Instead, other more enduring motivations, such as the desire to enhance teacher quality and the assumption that job satisfaction will lead to greater retention, are providing the impetus for the rise of teacher mentoring in the state since 1990.

As outlined below, schools and districts recognize a number of expected and actual benefits from providing teacher mentoring. Program planners at the district level and educators at the school and classroom level also are grappling with a number of challenges to successful implementation of mentoring programs.

This study identified justifications for mentoring beginning teachers that are corroborated by current research on the beneficial effects of mentoring. One major reason is the potential for mentoring to improve the quality of skills and knowledge of beginning teachers, thus increasing student achievement. Another is the possibility of

addressing the teacher shortage by stemming the tide of attrition of beginning teachers. Improving the skills and knowledge of beginning teachers was the most prevalent concern guiding the formation of the BEST program in New Oaks ISD and was the primary perceived benefit of providing teacher mentoring. As critical as the teacher attrition problem has grown in the last decade, the New Oaks ISD and its schools continue to focus on the needs of the students through teacher quality.

My findings reinforce the findings of others: A quality induction program is important as school districts hire and support professionals to teach and a need exists to continually study and refine the new teacher induction program. With state policies being “loosely coupled” (Britzman 2003; Marshall-Pepin, 2005), it is left to the districts to design an appropriate induction program that meets their own new teachers’ needs.

Applying this study to past or future studies on new teacher perceptions of teaching and the impact of an induction program is limited due to the character and context of the district in this study. The induction program did provide an avenue for the new teachers to meet as a group during their first year, however, this was not perceived as effective by the second-year teachers participating in the study. The BEST program also provided an assigned mentor with a focus on teacher development and improvement. The teachers in the study were not totally convinced that the induction program itself did contribute to their survival during their first two critical years, but they did feel the collaboration and mentoring component provided a considerable positive impact. Their perceptions of mentoring conveyed that their mentors did provide needed support in dealing with reality shock, but limited accessibility to the mentor and

lack of time for both the mentor and the mentee to spend fostering their relationship were seen as obstacles.

Induction programs may not necessarily be responsible for increased retention rates, but a hypothesis could be posited that the induction programs do help. Literature demonstrates that teachers appear to emerge from their induction experiences with a strong biographical orientation to pedagogical decision-making (Breaux & Wong, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004) and the teacher participants in this study claimed this to be true of themselves as well.

Even though the induction program system is decentralized in the United States and state programs vary widely, evidence seems to suggest that new teacher induction programs help those new to the profession through nurturing and support, and may partially increase retention rates through assistance and assessment of teacher effectiveness. However, an induction program can only promote new teacher success and improvement if the participants view the program as useful and relevant. Schools can enhance the beneficial effects of strong initial preparation with solid induction and mentoring in the first few years of a new teacher's career. It is imperative that stakeholders in the district be involved in the process and believe in the success of the induction program. This would include veteran teachers, school support staff, administrators, central office employees, and school board members. The goal of a structured, comprehensive, sustained induction program is to produce effective teachers. Based on the perceptions of the three second-year teachers in this study, New Oaks ISD values the role of an induction program and is trying its best to combat the "sink or

swim” approach that many teachers had to contend with in the past. Although each participant in this study did not have extremely positive mentoring relationships that fostered development, the all attributed the BEST program to the development of a mentoring culture wherein they did find informal mentoring avenues that proved to be supportive.

An incentive for a district to provide support and guidance for new teachers can be formulated based on Danielwicz’s statement, “Education is transmittable capital; its value and power can pass from teachers to students” (2001, p. 3). The investment in human capital leads to productivity and effectiveness of teachers, which is reflected in student achievement. Implementing strategies directed toward providing support and guidance for new teachers may prove less expensive than the continual training of new teachers who do not stay in the profession. New Oaks ISD has invested time and energy into developing and retaining quality teachers. Inducting the teachers effectively and efficiently not only helps the beginning teacher thrive and survive, but has a direct impact on student achievement. Successful induction programs go a long way toward improving the quality of teaching and ensuring student achievement. Huling-Austin (1985) maintain that four general goals can reasonably be expected form induction programs:

- 1) To improve teaching performance;
- 2) To increase the retention of promising beginning teachers;
- 3) To promote the personal and professional well-being of beginning teachers; and

- 4) To satisfy mandated requirements relating to induction and certification problems.

All four of these goals were perceived by the second-year teachers in this study to be evident in the New Oaks ISD's BEST program. Again, it is important to note that the BEST program was given indirect credit in many areas concerning the amount of nurturing and support the second-year teachers perceived to be receiving. The phenomena of the mentoring culture that is formed when a school district "buys in" to an induction philosophy has been discussed numerous time throughout this study and played a major role in the data responses of the study participants.

Findings in literature spanning over two decades suggests that unless new teachers are given some support to help make them successful, the trend of teachers leaving the profession will continue, with consequent disruption of the school culture and student learning (Grissmer, Kirby, Rand & Lilly, 1991; Scherer, 1999). Not only have comprehensive induction programs proven beneficial since the 1980s, but mentors and administrators are valuable to a new teacher's professional and personal development as well. As expressed by the teachers, the mentors and principals have been significant in helping them remain focused, positive, and optimistic during the first two years. Assistance and assessment (INTASC, 1992; Odell & Huling, 2000) aspects were evident at the New Oaks ISD. Professional development through the induction process and support from colleagues provided assistance to the new teachers in helping them grow professionally and personally during their first two years of teaching. Assessment

by the principals via classroom evaluations preceded by mentor observations helped contribute to the enhancement of the teachers' instructional and professional strategies.

The reality, complexity and plight of teaching are reflected in the challenges the teachers have faced over the course of their two years of teaching. All teachers, new or veteran, face obstacles associated with teaching, but how the challenges are dealt with is the difference between a distinguished, skilled teacher and one who is merely holding down a position. How each second-year teacher dealt with the complexity of teaching gave insights into the various perspectives and attitudes of the teachers' two years in New Oaks ISD.

Induction is a systematic process beginning prior to the first day of teaching and continuing through the first few years of the profession. An induction program should entail orientation prior to the beginning of school, ongoing professional development focusing on improving and refining of instructional strategies directed at student learning, and a mentoring support system for two years. Although in theory the BEST program was set up to include the first two years of a teachers experience in the district, the teachers in this study did not have much involvement with the BEST program during their second year since it was not mandatory. These elements are present at New Oaks ISD to meet the current needs of the new teachers, but a conscious effort is still needed to make the necessary adaptations to reach all new teachers more effectively. As the school district continues to refine the existing induction program, the focus should be on looking at how the structure of the program can better provide the needed and wanted support for new teachers.

This study provided beneficial insights from three second-year teachers' perceptions of teaching and the direct impact of the BEST program. The induction program, and/or the mentoring culture that is created as a result of the presence and emphasis of the program has proven beneficial in the socialization process and in easing the transition from pre-service preparation into full-time teaching. The support network each teacher in the study has established in her two years in New Oaks ISD has provided important help in dealing with the challenges and reality of teaching. The overall perception of the three second-year teachers in this case-study is that the New Oaks ISD appears to be effective in the retention of highly-qualified educators during their first two years of teaching.

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APPENDIX A

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS FOR ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

Tell me the story of how you became a teacher.

If teaching is different than you expected it to be, how is it different?

Explain what your teaching experience has been like this year.

Name some of your likes and dislikes of the teaching profession.

Has the BEST program assisted you this year? If so, in what ways?

What types of support do you consider that you need as a beginning teacher?

What do you believe district support should look like?

Are you receiving what you believe district level support should look like? How do you
feel about the BEST program?

What part will the district level support that you have received play in whether or not
you decide to remain in the teaching profession?

Do you have any other information that you would like to share?

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT (SECOND-YEAR TEACHER) QUESTIONNAIRE

1. You teach at a/an:

☐ Elementary School ☐ Middle School ☐ High School ☐

2. On average, how often do you attend district required mentoring meetings through the BEST program?

☐ Weekly

☐ About twice a month

☐ About once a month

☐ Less than once a month

☐ Never

3. On average, how often do you meet with your mentor/mentee?

☐ Weekly

☐ About twice a month

☐ About once a month

☐ Less than once a month

☐ Never

4. How would you rate your mentoring relationship?

- ☐ Very satisfying
- ☐ Somewhat satisfying
- ☐ Neither satisfying nor dissatisfying
- ☐ Somewhat Dissatisfying
- ☐ Very dissatisfying

5. How closely do you think your expectations for the mentoring relationship match the ones of your mentor?

- ☐ Very closely
- ☐ Somewhat closely
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Somewhat closely
- ☐ Not closely at all

6. Additional information regarding your mentoring program:

- i) Is participation voluntary? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- ii) Did you choose your mentor/mentee? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- iii) Do you both teach the same content areas? ☐ Yes ☐ No
(i.e. Math, ELA, science, etc.)

iv) Do you both teach at the same grade level? _ Yes _ No

(i.e. elementary, middle, secondary)

v) Do you both teach in the same building? _ Yes _ No

7. How well do you feel your pre-service training prepared you as an educator?
8. Have you received professional development to prepare you in your role as a new teacher?
9. How has your mentor helped with your understanding of curriculum and assessment?
10. How has this program helped you in the evaluation of student work and designing instruction for a diverse population?
11. How has your mentor supported you in communicating with parents?
12. How often do you meet with your mentor teacher currently? How often did you met during your first year?

13. How do you focus your time when you meet? Do you have an agenda? Is it made up of management issues, curriculum, assessment, concerns, and successes? Give examples.
14. Are you keeping a journal of reflections and questions to share with your mentor?
Can you give some examples?
15. How do you communicate to each other when not at a meeting?
16. What types of activities are you involved in with your mentor? (i.e. book study, committee work, after school programs.) If so how are these supporting your practice?
17. How has being mentored changed your practice?
18. Do you feel more confident as a teacher this year as compared to last year? Does that confidence come from your involvement in the BEST program? Explain:
19. What ideas do you have to improve the mentor program?
20. Do you have any thoughts or ideas that we have not discussed today about mentoring that you would like to share?

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

Texas A&M University: Consent to Act as a Human Participant

Project Title: *Second-Year Teacher Perceptions of a Teacher Induction*

Program: A Close-up of One School District

Project Director: Karla Eidson

Dear Participant,

My name is Karla Eidson and I am a doctoral student at Texas A&M University in the School of Education.

I am conducting a study to learn about the perceptions of second-year teachers concerning their involvement in the BEST Induction Program for Beginning Teachers. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a second-year teacher in New Oaks Independent School District and have been a BEST participant.

Your participation in this research study will help me have a better understanding of what you perceive the program to be in regards as an aid to you. The research will help school districts and site based administrators decide on the types of professional development that beginning teachers need to be offered and the level of support

necessary in order for beginning teachers to be successful. Your experiences will shed light on the critical issues facing beginning teachers. You will benefit from this study because your voice will be filling a void in research that presents the need for the administrators and teachers perspective. Society will benefit because your voice will be contributing to the body of knowledge in education.

All participants' information will remain confidential. During the course of the project your responses will be kept strictly confidential and none of the data released in this study will identify you by name. Your name will remain anonymous and you will have the opportunity to select a pseudonym to be used during and after the interview. With your consent I would like to audio tape up to two one hour interviews and take some hand written notes as you speak. There are no risks to you as a participant in this study.

The information gathered during the interview will remain in secured possession in a locked file cabinet in my study at home and will not be shared with anyone other than members of my dissertation committee. After three years, the written notes will be shredded and the recordings will be erased. If you would like to withdraw from the study, you may do so at any time without any consequences. If you choose to withdraw from the research process, neither your interview nor transcripts will be used in this study. Furthermore, you may discontinue participation in this project at any time or refuse to respond to any questions to which you choose not to answer. You are a voluntary participant and have no liability or responsibility for the implementation,

methodology, claims, substance or outcomes resulting from this research project. There will be no adverse consequences to you for not participating in this study.

You are free to ask any questions or express your concerns with me regarding this project at any time. You may contact me by telephone at (979) 218-1068 or email me at keidson@tamu.edu. My faculty advisor is Dr. Jack Helfeldt and his contact number is (979)845-8384.

The Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research involving people follows federal regulations, has approved this research and this consent form. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided to you if the information might affect your willingness to continue participation in the project.

Sincerely,

Karla Eidson

Doctoral Student

School of Education

Texas A&M University

Participant's Assurances:

I have received a copy of the approved Institutional Review Board Research Application Form for this research project. I am familiar with the purpose, procedures, intent, scope, and benefits involved in this research. I understand that the Institutional Review Board is not conducting or sponsoring this research project.

_____ **I am willing** to participate in this research project.

_____ **I am not willing** to participate in this research project.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX D

JOURNAL STEMS

Name_____Date_____Week__#2

Journal Stems for Reflection

~ ~ ~
The most important thing that I have learned thus far is...

~ ~ ~
In working with classroom management, I would like to.....

~ ~ ~
Strategies I want to remember.....

~ ~ ~
At this point, I know that I can control.....

By the end of the year, I want to be able to....

I have a question about.....

I am concerned about.....

This week I am most proud of.....

My participation in the BEST program has affected my this week by:



I rate my experiences this week as:

_____Inadequate _____Marginal _____ Satisfactory_____Excellent

Modified from: *Mentoring Matters-A Practical Guide to Learning-Focused Relationships* (2003).

Reflection Form: **R-3** (Preparedness)

Name_____Date_____Week #3

Journal Stems for ReflectionThe most difficult part of planning...In working with lesson plans, I would like to.....Strategies I use to keep students on task are...

At this point, I know that I stay ahead by.....

By the end of the year, I want to be able to....

I have a question about.....

This week I am most proud of.....

My participation in the BEST program has affected my this week by:

I rate my experiences this week as:

_____Inadequate _____Marginal _____ Satisfactory_____Excellent

Modified from: *Mentoring Matters-A Practical Guide to Learning-Focused Relationships* (2003).

Reflection Form: **R-4** (LESSON)

Name _____ Date _____ Week #4

Journal Stems for Reflection

As a result of my instruction this week, students can...

I'm thinking about making the following changes in my lessons.....

If I could re-teach one lesson it would be...

The strategies that were the most successful this week.....

By the end of the year, I want to be able to....

I have a question about.....

This week I am concerned about.....

My participation in the BEST program has affected my this week by:

I rate my experiences this week as:

_____Inadequate _____Marginal _____ Satisfactory_____Excellent

Modified from: *Mentoring Matters-A Practical Guide to Learning-Focused Relationships* (2003).

APPENDIX E

INFORMAL CONSENT: INITIAL TEACHER PARTICIPANT CONTACT (E-MAIL)

Hello, my name is Karla Eidson. I have been given your name and email address as a second-year teacher at _____(name of school) from _____(BEST program coordinator).

I would like for you to be a participant in a research study involving second-year teachers and their perceptions of the induction program and the mentoring you have received during your first year of teaching. All information and conversations will be strictly confidential. No real names will be used throughout any part of the study. This study is NOT a program evaluation of the BEST program or any other program, it is a case-study intended to provide an accurate snapshot of your perceptions of the mentoring program.

The study will entail talking to you in one-to-one interviews on two separate occasions. During these interviews, I will ask you a series of questions that will ask you to focus on your teaching experiences and perceptions in the first 2 years of teaching in the _____ school system.

I am a former elementary school teacher, so I am aware of your busy schedule and will honor it. I currently teach at an Institution of Higher Education in the Education Department and am working on my doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction.

Please respond to this message indicating whether you are willing to be a participant or not in this study. I really hope that you are willing to participate. Again, no names are attached to any information we discuss throughout the entire process. I will respect your privacy and your time.

Feel free to call or email me at _____. I would be glad to further explain the study to you and answer any questions you may have.

I will be anxiously waiting to hear from you. There are only a few teachers participating in this study, due to its nature, so your participation is key.

Thank you,

Karla Eidson

APPENDIX F

DISTRICT CONSENT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



January 27, 2009

Mrs. Karla Eidson
Texas A&M University
4232 TAMU
College Station, Texas 77843-4232

Dear Mrs. Eidson:

The [REDACTED] Independent School District [REDACTED] Research Committee has reviewed your proposal titled *Effects and Perceptions of a Teacher Induction Program: A Close-up of One School District*. The committee recognizes the importance of teacher retention and its impact on student performance. Furthermore, [REDACTED] is cognizant of the limited research that addresses this important issue.

The [REDACTED] Research Committee accepts the invitation to work with you on this noteworthy study. [REDACTED] (209-1045) will serve as your contact person for the district.

Thank you for considering [REDACTED] as a partner in this academic research. The district is anxious to receive your feedback when the study is completed.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lucy Larson", written over a blacked-out rectangular area.

Executive Director for Assessment, Accountability, and Research
[REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

APPENDIX G

GOALS OF THE MENTOR INSTITUTE

The Mentor will learn and understand:

- The rationale of mentoring;
- The qualities of an effective mentor;
- The top needs of a new teacher;
- The phases of beginning teacher growth, paralleled with the levels of concern for new teachers.

The Mentor will develop and practice:

- Use of the pre-observation conference, observation, and post-observation conference;
- Assessing the conceptual level of a new teacher;
- Determining the Instructional Leadership Style that should be used;
- Effective use of different Instructional Leadership Styles;
- Skills needed to form effective mentoring relationships (Behavior Styles Inventory);
- Scripting while observing;
- Using various data collection tools;
- Effective communication skills used in coaching;
- Using tools for reflection.

APPENDIX H

MENTOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE

BEST PROGRAM

According to the program guidelines, the Campus Lead Mentor is responsible for coordinating the mentoring on his or her campus by:

1. Performing the duties of Mentor as outlined by New Oaks ISD Mentor Institute or identifying Campus Mentors to mentor new teachers and perform mentor duties as outlined by New Oaks ISD Mentor Institute.
2. Maintaining records of the Campus Mentor Program and reporting to the Induction Program Coordinator.
3. Planning the New Hire Induction for his or her particular campus. The event will occur during the week of New Teacher Institute.
4. Working with the Induction Program Coordinator and the District Master Mentors to plan professional development activities for mentors and novices on the campus. (NEST—New Educator Support Team)

Duties of Mentor

1. Using guidelines from the program's Mentor Manual and the mentor literature, establish a working relationship with the novice and set ground rules for mentoring.

2. During the first weeks of school, make numerous visits to the classroom to identify needs of the novice, provide affirmation for them, and continue to establish a working relationship with them.
3. Meet with the novice every week during the first semester of school.
4. Maintain communication with the novice through journaling, e-mail, and weekly meetings to identify problems the novice may have and provide affirmation for the things done well.
5. Conduct a Pre-conference, Observation, and Post-conference each six weeks during the first semester of school.
6. Conduct a Pre-conference, Observation, and Post-conference twice during the second semester, before the week of TAKS in April.
7. Maintain a log of communication, conferences, and support given. Submit a copy of the log to the Induction Program Coordinator each six weeks.
8. Attend District Mentor Institute and subsequent follow-up meetings (MI-BEST Sessions).
9. Serve on one of three committees of the Mentor Institute: Program Evaluation, New Teacher Institute, or Celebrations.

The BEST program lists an exception to the above duties:

Campus Mentors who share these duties with a District Mentor do not need to fulfill these requirements, which could create an excessive amount of observations for the novice. This particular mentor will be required to complete only two observations the first semester—the same as the second semester.

APPENDIX I

GOALS OF THE NEW TEACHER INSTITUTE

Goal 1: Develop Basic Classroom Management Skills

- Establish classroom rules that are specific, fair, and enforceable.
- Develop a classroom discipline plan with consequences aligned with the campus discipline plan.
- Distinguish between punishment and consequences.
- Identify teacher behaviors that can escalate or deescalate student behavior.
- Use room arrangement to support classroom management.
- Develop strategies for dealing with off-task/inappropriate behavior.
- Distinguish between positive and negative reinforcement. Develop strategies to positively reinforce desired student behavior.
- Identify management strategies for special populations.
- Recognize how motivation supports management. Develop strategies for motivating the unmotivated learner.
- Recognize how positive teacher-student relationships support management. Develop strategies for building positive relationships.

Goal 2: Design Effective Classroom Routines and Procedures

- Identify the role of routines in an effective classroom management plan.

- Identify essential classroom procedures (beginning and ending class, bell work, turning in work, restroom, taking attendance, lunch count).
- Use a framework, including timeline, for clearly teaching procedures to students.

Goal 3: Develop a Plan for the First Weeks of School

- Plan activities for the first day of school that allow the teacher to get to know the students and introduce rules, procedures, and content.
- Develop a checklist of materials to be distributed to students (syllabus, parent letter, info sheet).
- Become familiar with administrative responsibilities associated with the first weeks of school (attendance, textbooks, paperwork, Special Education).

Goal 4: Develop Lesson-planning Skills

- Identify the parts of the lesson cycle.
- Develop lesson plans using the lesson cycle (including one to teach classroom rules).
- Plan for special populations (Gifted/Talented [GT], Special Education [SPED], English Language Learners [ELL]).
- Learn how to access New Oaks ISD curriculum units; identify components of units.

- Become familiar with formal assessments for grade level taught (checkpoints, TAKS) and how these assessments can be utilized in planning lessons.

Goal 5: Develop Active Participation Strategies

- Define active participation and identify its importance in the lesson cycle.
- Learn a variety of active participation strategies.
- Develop strategies for managing student behavior during active participation.
- Learn to use active participation to improve student performance.

Goal 6: Professionalism

- Identify professional dress.
- Identify guidelines for maintaining appropriate teacher-student relationships.
- Identify guidelines for communication with parents, colleagues, and administrators.
- Become familiar with confidentiality/breach of confidentiality issues.
- Identify common documentation techniques (parent contacts, SPED and ELL paperwork).

Goal 7: Become Familiar with Campus Layout and Organization

- Take school tour
- Meet administrative staff
- Get keys, IDs, campus codes, parking information

Goal 8: Learn to Use District Technology Resources

- Demonstration of SmartBoard

APPENDIX J

PRE-CONFERENCE PROTOCOL

Components	Notes
<p>Opening</p> <p>___ Begin on positive note.</p> <p>___ State purpose of observation.</p>	
<p>Feelings</p> <p>___ Mentor shares feelings.</p> <p>___ Novice shares feelings.</p>	
<p>Student Learning Focus</p> <p>___ What should students be able to do at the end of the lesson (objective)?</p> <p>___ State reason for choosing this particular objective.</p> <p>___ What learning strategies will the lesson plan include?</p> <p>___ Active participation strategies</p> <p>___ Higher level thinking questions/activities</p>	

<p>___ Technology</p> <p>___ Differentiation</p> <p>___ What data will indicate whether students met the objective?</p>	
<p>Classroom Management</p> <p>___ What classroom management strategies will be employed to maximize learning?</p>	
<p>Teacher Growth Focus</p> <p>___ What instructional area or skill is the focus?</p>	
<p>Mentor Data Collection</p> <p>___ Share/discuss observation instrument to be used.</p>	
<p>Ground Rules</p> <p>___ Remind novice of mentor note-taking.</p> <p>___ Discuss logistics (ex. Where should mentor sit?).</p>	
<p>Additional Information</p>	

<p>___ What information about the students/class would be helpful to know while observing this lesson?</p>	
<p>Follow-up</p> <p>___ Identify date & time for post-conference.</p> <p>___ Provide novice with Self-Analysis Checklist.</p> <p>___ Questions?</p>	

Novice: _____

Date:

Mentor: _____

Campus:

Adapted from Reiman, Alan J. and Lois Theis-Sprinthall, *Mentoring and Supervision for Teacher Development*.
New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998

APPENDIX K

POST-CONFERENCE PROTOCOL

Components	Notes
<p>Opening</p> <p>___ Novice brings completed Self-Analysis Checklist.</p> <p>___ Novice shares feelings.</p> <p>___ Mentor shares feelings.</p>	
<p>Student Learning Outcomes</p> <p>___ Did students achieve the objective(s)?</p> <p>___ Share evidence of objective(s) met/not met.</p> <p>___ What learning strategies were used in the lesson?</p> <p>___ Active participation strategies</p> <p>___ Higher level thinking questions/activities</p> <p>___ Technology</p> <p>___ Differentiation</p> <p>___ Is remediation needed?</p>	

<p>Classroom Management</p> <p>___ Did classroom management support or interfere with the lesson?</p> <p>___ Discuss classroom management strategies.</p>	
<p>Teacher Growth Focus</p> <p>___ Was the teacher growth focus reached?</p> <p>___ What changes would the novice make?</p>	
<p>Strengths</p> <p>What strengths did the novice exhibit?</p>	
<p>Pay Attention to:</p> <p>What areas need attention/refinement?</p>	
<p>Focus of Next Coaching Plan</p> <p>___ What should be the next focus area(s)?</p>	

<input type="checkbox"/> Student learning outcomes <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom management <input type="checkbox"/> Refine current teaching behavior focus <input type="checkbox"/> Identify new teaching behavior focus <input type="checkbox"/> End with statement of encouragement.	
--	--

Novice: _____

Date:

Mentor: _____

Campus:

Adapted from Reiman, Alan J. and Lois Theis-Sprinthall, *Mentoring and Supervision for Teacher Development*.

New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998

APPENDIX L

NOVICE SELF-ANALYSIS FORM

Components	Novice Analysis
<p>Student Learning Outcomes</p> <p>What was the planned learning objective?</p> <p>Did students achieve the objective?</p> <p>Evidence?</p>	
<p>Classroom Management</p> <p>Did classroom management support or interfere with the lesson?</p> <p>Evidence?</p>	

<p>Teacher Growth Focus</p> <p>My focus for teacher growth was...</p> <p>Was my teacher growth focus met?</p> <p>Evidence?</p>	
<p>Satisfaction with Taught Lesson</p> <p>___ High ___ Moderate ___ Low</p> <p>Would I make any changes in this lesson?</p>	
<p>Follow-up</p> <p>What area do I need to work on?</p> <p>What area am I ready to work on?</p>	

Novice: _____

Date:

Mentor: _____

Campus:

Adapted from Reiman, Alan J. and Lois Theis-Sprinthall, *Mentoring and Supervision for Teacher Development*.
New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998

APPENDIX M

EIGHT DOMAINS OF THE PDAS EVALUATION

- Domain I: Active, successful student participation in the learning process
- Domain II: Learner-centered instruction
- Domain III: Evaluation and feedback on student progress
- Domain IV: Management of student discipline, instructional strategies, time, and materials
- Domain V: Professional communication
- Domain VI: Professional development
- Domain VII: Compliance with policies, operating procedures, and requirements
- Domain VIII: Improvement of academic performance of all students on the campus

APPENDIX N

CORE COMPETENCIES

#1 Instructional Planning...The teacher:

- ☐ selects and posts lesson objectives(s).
- ☐ aligns lesson objective(s) with district and state (TEKS) curriculum.
- ☐ has long- and short-term plans based on district and state goals.
- ☐ articulates central concepts and structures of the subject taught.
- ☐ selects learning activities designed to make subject matter understandable and meaningful for students.

#2 Management of Instructional Time...The teacher:

- ☐ has materials, supplies and equipment ready.
- ☐ gets the class started quickly.
- ☐ uses available time for learning and keeps students on task.

#3 Management of Student Behavior...The teacher:

- ☐ has established procedures for handling routine administrative matters.
- ☐ has established rules and procedures that govern student conversation, movement, and participation during different types of instruction - whole group, small group, etc.
- ☐ frequently monitors student behavior during whole-class, small group, seat work, and transition activities.
- ☐ stops inappropriate behavior promptly and consistently, yet maintains student dignity.
- ☐ provides brief, specific affirmation for appropriate student behavior.
- ☐ analyzes the classroom environment and makes adjustments to support learning.
- ☐ maintains a high level of student engagement in learning activities throughout the lesson.
- ☐ encourages students to be engaged in and responsible for their own learning.

#4 Instructional Presentation...The teacher:

- ☐ speaks fluently and precisely.
- ☐ makes students aware of lesson objective.
- ☐ "hooks" student interest with opening activity.
- ☐ links instructional activities to prior learning.
- ☐ accurately presents lesson content.
- ☐ provides relevant examples and modeling to illustrate concepts and skills.
- ☐ employs a variety of teaching strategies geared to diverse learners (ex. graphic organizers, centers, direct instruction, varied student groupings, technology, movement activities, memory devices).
- ☐ employs questions or tasks designed to promote thinking at varied levels (performance skills, critical thinking, problem solving).
- ☐ paces lesson briskly, slowing presentation as needed for student understanding, but avoiding unnecessary slowdowns.
- ☐ transitions smoothly between lesson segments.
- ☐ checks to be sure assignments are clear.
- ☐ provides opportunity for guided practice.
- ☐ provides opportunity for independent practice.
- ☐ provides lesson closure.
- ☐ ties all lesson activities to the objective(s).

#5 Instructional Monitoring...The teacher

- ☐ maintains clear, firm, and reasonable work standards.
- ☐ asks questions that students can answer with a high rate of success.
- ☐ circulates to check each student's performance.
- ☐ uses oral, written, and other work products to evaluate the effects of instructional activities and to check students' progress.
- ☐ poses questions clearly and sequentially.
- ☐ uses student responses to adjust teaching as necessary.

6 Instructional Feedback...The teacher

- ☐ provides brief, descriptive affirmation for correct student responses.
- ☐ provides sustaining feedback after an incorrect response (ex. probing, repeating the question, giving a clue, allowing more time).
- ☐ has established procedures for providing prompt feedback on out-of-class work.
- ☐ encourages student self-analysis of work.
- ☐ provides opportunity for collaborative and supportive peer feedback.

7 Assessment...The teacher:

- ☐ employs a variety of formal and informal assessment strategies.
- ☐ uses assessment to show whether lesson objectives have been met.
- ☐ uses diagnostic information to plan and adapt instruction.

#8 Student Development and Diversity...The teacher:

- ☐ understands how students learn and develop, and provides learning experiences based on student developmental needs (ex. active engagement, manipulation).
- ☐ incorporates students' experiences and culture into learning activities.
- ☐ recognizes and provides learning experiences that address different learning styles.
- ☐ makes provision for, and uses appropriate services and resources for, exceptional learning differences/needs.

#9 The Learning Environment...The teacher:

- ☐ provides elements (ex. posters, artifacts) to motivate and support learning.
- ☐ displays current student work demonstrating successful achievement of objectives.
- ☐ organizes classroom materials in an orderly and accessible way.
- ☐ arranges classroom seating to support current student learning.
- ☐ reinforces positive social skills and respectful peer interactions.
- ☐ models respectful teacher-student interactions.
- ☐ demonstrates interest in and/or enthusiasm for lesson topic and activities.

APPENDIX O

COMPREHENSIVE CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FORM: NEW OAKS ISD



MENTORING PROGRAM

Comprehensive Classroom Observation Form: New Oaks ISD Mentoring Program		
Teacher: Observer: School: Date: Beginning Time: Ending Time: Observation #: <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Focus Area(s): <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> All	Lesson Subject: # Students in Class: Grade Level: Lesson Objective:	Evaluation Key: 4-Exceptional (Teacher demonstrates solid mastery of standard) 3-Competent (Teacher meets standard of competence) 2-Emerging (Teacher shows progress toward meeting standard) 1-Not Met N/O-Not Observed
Core Standards for Instruction	Comments/Examples	Standard Composite Rating
#1 Instructional Planning...The teacher: ___ selects and posts lesson objectives(s). ___ aligns lesson objective(s) with district and state (TEKS) curriculum. ___ has long- and short-term plans based on district and state goals. ___ articulates central concepts and structures of the subject taught.		<input type="checkbox"/> 4-Exceptional <input type="checkbox"/> 3-Competent <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> 1-Not Met

<p>___ selects learning activities designed to make subject matter understandable and meaningful for students.</p>		
<p>#2 Management of Instructional Time...The teacher:</p> <p>___ has materials, supplies and equipment ready.</p> <p>___ gets the class started quickly.</p> <p>___ uses available time for learning and keeps students on task.</p>		<p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>4-Exceptional</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>3-Competent</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>2-Emerging</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1-Not Met</p>
<p>#3 Management of Student Behavior...The teacher:</p> <p>___ has established procedures for handling routine administrative matters.</p> <p>___ has established rules and procedures that govern student conversation, movement, and participation during different types of instruction - whole group, small group, etc.</p> <p>___ frequently monitors student behavior during whole-class, small group, seat work, and transition activities.</p> <p>___ stops inappropriate behavior promptly and consistently, yet maintains student dignity.</p> <p>___ provides brief, specific affirmation for appropriate student behavior.</p> <p>___ analyzes the classroom environment and makes adjustments to support learning.</p> <p>___ maintains a high level of student engagement in learning activities throughout the lesson.</p> <p>___ encourages students to be engaged in and responsible for their own learning.</p>		<p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>4-Exceptional</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>3-Competent</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>2-Emerging</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1-Not Met</p>
<p>Core Standards for Instruction</p>	<p>Comments/Examples</p>	<p>Standard Composite Rating</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">#4 Instructional Presentation...The teacher:</p> <p>___ speaks fluently and precisely.</p> <p>___ makes students aware of lesson objective.</p> <p>___ “hooks” student interest with opening activity.</p> <p>___ links instructional activities to prior learning.</p> <p>___ accurately presents lesson content.</p> <p>___ provides relevant examples and modeling to illustrate concepts and skills.</p> <p>___ employs a variety of teaching strategies geared to diverse learners (ex. graphic organizers, centers, direct instruction, varied student groupings, technology, movement activities, memory devices).</p> <p>___ employs questions or tasks designed to promote thinking at varied levels (performance skills, critical thinking, problem solving).</p> <p>___ paces lesson briskly, slowing presentation as needed for student understanding, but avoiding unnecessary slowdowns.</p> <p>___ transitions smoothly between lesson segments.</p> <p>___ checks to be sure assignments are clear.</p> <p>___ provides opportunity for guided practice.</p> <p>___ provides opportunity for independent practice.</p> <p>___ provides lesson closure.</p> <p>___ ties all lesson activities to the objective(s).</p>		<div style="text-align: right;"> <input type="checkbox"/> 4-Exceptional <input type="checkbox"/> 3-Competent <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> 1-Not Met </div>
<p style="text-align: center;">#5 Instructional Monitoring...The teacher</p> <p>___ maintains clear, firm, and reasonable work standards.</p> <p>___ asks questions that students can answer with a high rate of success.</p> <p>___ circulates to check each student’s</p>		<div style="text-align: right;"> <input type="checkbox"/> 4-Exceptional <input type="checkbox"/> 3-Competent <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Emerging </div>

<p>performance.</p> <p>___ uses oral, written, and other work products to evaluate the effects of instructional activities and to check students' progress.</p> <p>___ poses questions clearly and sequentially.</p> <p>___ uses student responses to adjust teaching as necessary.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> 1-Not Met
<p># 6 Instructional Feedback...The teacher</p> <p>___ provides brief, descriptive affirmation for correct student responses.</p> <p>___ provides sustaining feedback after an incorrect response (ex. probing, repeating the question, giving a clue, allowing more time).</p> <p>___ has established procedures for providing prompt feedback on out-of-class work.</p> <p>___ encourages student self-analysis of work.</p> <p>___ provides opportunity for collaborative and supportive peer feedback.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> 4-Exceptional <input type="checkbox"/> 3-Competent <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> 1-Not Met
<p>Core Standards for Instruction</p>	<p>Comments/Examples</p>	<p>Standard Composite Rating</p>
<p># 7 Assessment...The teacher:</p> <p>___ employs a variety of formal and informal assessment strategies.</p> <p>___ uses assessment to show whether lesson objectives have been met.</p> <p>___ uses diagnostic information to plan and adapt instruction.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> 4-Exceptional <input type="checkbox"/> 3-Competent <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> 1-Not Met
<p>#8 Student Development and Diversity...The teacher:</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> 4-Exceptional

<p>___ understands how students learn and develop, and provides learning experiences based on student developmental needs (ex. active engagement, manipulation).</p> <p>___ incorporates students' experiences and culture into learning activities.</p> <p>___ recognizes and provides learning experiences that address different learning styles.</p> <p>___ makes provision for, and uses appropriate services and resources for, exceptional learning differences/needs.</p>		<div style="text-align: right;"> <input type="checkbox"/> 3-Competent <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> 1-Not Met </div>
<p style="text-align: center;">#9 The Learning Environment...The teacher:</p> <p>___ provides elements (ex. posters, artifacts) to motivate and support learning.</p> <p>___ displays current student work demonstrating successful achievement of objectives.</p> <p>___ organizes classroom materials in an orderly and accessible way.</p> <p>___ arranges classroom seating to support current student learning.</p> <p>___ reinforces positive social skills and respectful peer interactions.</p> <p>___ models respectful teacher-student interactions.</p> <p>___ demonstrates interest in and/or enthusiasm for lesson topic and activities.</p>		<div style="text-align: right;"> <input type="checkbox"/> 4-Exceptional <input type="checkbox"/> 3-Competent <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Emerging <input type="checkbox"/> 1-Not Met </div>
Teacher Strengths	Focus Area(s) for Growth	
<p> Teacher _____</p> <p> Observer _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>		

VITA

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Eidson, K. and Cassell E. (February, 2008). Using online assessment of student learning and development to facilitate an effective study abroad program. College Station, TX: Annual Assessment Conference (AAC).